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Happiness and Wellness

Biopsychosocial and Anthropological
Perspectives

Edited by Floriana Irtelli and Fabio Gabrielli



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and Anthropological
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Preface

Man's openness to the world and to happiness.

Man has been metaphorically defined as an animal open to a range of possibilities in his being in the world [1–3] and, according to Wittgenstein, the environment constitutes the specific framework in which living beings, including man, fit in on the basis of their predispositions. The world, on the other hand, according to the same author, constitutes the totality of what exists, the wider reality of the world that concerns the subsistence or non-existence of states of things [4]. In other words, man, unlike animals, deals in life with lack, negation, possibility, desire, or regret.

Man, therefore, does not live by certainties, but lives by deficiencies, by strategies to fill these deficiencies, by expectations, desires, regrets, novelties, and possibilities, measures of possible worlds full of anguish. Man, unlike other living beings, has **his own biography (bios) with its own beginning and end. As the Greeks used to say, human life is a segment, a specification of *zoè* (biological life)** with its continuous, inexhaustible succession of natural cycles of births and deaths, and man, starting from biological life, experiences in his existence a continuous dialectic between need and desire. Man represents the effort, the tension and the internal drive (*conatus*) to exist [5]. In other words, he perseveres in his being, organising and rooting his existence on the basis of the dialectic between need and desire. Petrosino distinguishes between the concept of desire and the concept of need, and in this regard states that man not only experiences, like any other living being, multiple needs, but is also a subject that experiences desire, which cannot in any way be resolved as a need. The absence that sets the latter in motion does not coincide with the lack that inhabits desire, the latter not having the absence of an object as its object. Desire is not a particular need, nor even the totality of needs, because in fact at the level of desire the subject often lacks what he does not know or even does not know what he lacks [1–2]. In short, man whenever he satisfies a need never enjoys a sense of definitive fullness, since he also feels desire, and filling the voids triggered by need does not mean filling that structural and unbridgeable void that is desire, which is an ever-open opening, never governable and tameable. It is precisely for this reason that man reclaims both the care of his own needs and the care of his desire, which is surplus to the satisfaction of needs and is an expression of his unrepeatable flowering of life, of the never definitive meaning he attributes to his entire existence. Man is therefore called upon to cultivate what Novalis, in the *Henry of Ofterdingen*, calls the flower, that is, the overall meaning to be given to his own existence, that which makes us feel on the level of feeling, on the emotional level, the proximity or otherwise of attaining one's ideal image (Idealbild), as Scheler defines it [6]. In any case, net of the different theoretical perspectives of the discourse on happiness, man finds in his flowering, biographical and communitarian, the gesture par excellence, and only from this community of care for human frailties is a truly human discourse on the good life or, with a more idealised expression, a happy life possible.

We have brought together in this book contributions from various scientists from all over the world, welcoming different, multifaceted, dialectically open perspectives and sensitivities, including biological, biopsychosocial, anthropological, and philosophical

thematic approaches. We present various perspectives on happiness in both the short and long terms, according to short-range and teleological ontologies.

Nowadays, the concept of happiness is more frequently grasped in its complexity, according to the biopsychosocial approach; therefore, it is more often observed as a dimension that is influenced by several factors that are intertwined with each other over a longer period of time [7–9]. We should point out here that although this perspective more frequently looks at the long term, there is also the possibility of focusing on happiness in the very short term (e.g., focusing only on the momentary positive emotional state after many shared laughs in a social environment). However, happiness is nowadays more frequently understood as an existential aspect that is measured over a long period of life and that is also often manifested in today's very broad and widespread concept of well-being.

In order to focus on the complexity of this concept, this book includes several sections. The first is a review of biological views on happiness, for example, by measuring it in a positive emotional state in the short term, or by observing how the concept of happiness is influenced by peculiar biological states, typical of particular and limited phases of the life cycle, such as pregnancy.

The second section presents research on happiness that emphasises its psychological aspects and long-term perspectives as well as considers the broader concept of well-being.

The third section explores how the social point of view influences happiness. This is undeniable if we also think of Bauman's studies, for example, who observes that globalisation for some people means everything we are forced to do in order to achieve happiness, and for others, it is the very cause of our unhappiness [10]. This statement shows us how the habitat of life is inevitably influenced by a wider social environment as well as by the interpretations of individuals (the social and psychological aspects influence each other). Beyond globalisation, it was also interesting to observe how specific, individual local cultures can influence a specific society and the conception of happiness and well-being in that specific context.

Finally, the fourth section of the book presents a broader, anthropological philosophical view of happiness with a focus on specific cultural aspects.

In taking leave of this work, we thank all the scientists who participated and we trust that the scholar who wishes to consult this book will intercept themes, perspectives, and avenues of research that, precisely because of their complexity and diversity of contexts and approaches, will stimulate their intellectual curiosity and critical spirit.

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Section 1

Biological Perspective

Chapter 1

Contagious Laughter as an Innate Acoustic Stimulus That Provokes Positive Emotions and Affects – Possible Relationships of This Laughter with Happiness

Guillermo Arévalo-Pachón and Julio Eduardo Cruz

Abstract

This chapter delves into the topic of contagious laughter, as a little-studied vocalization (with the exception of the pioneering research by Provine), which contributes to the creation, maintenance, and strengthening of social ties. The text offers empirical evidence and arguments that support the thesis that contagious laughter and the laughter provoked by it involve a set of distinctive acoustic and perceptual characteristics and vocal, emotional, and affective effects of possible innate nature. The development of the chapter is also important for offering indirect support to the hypothesis or theories, such as (a) a supposed cerebral mechanism of perception/production of contagious laughter, (b) emotional contagion through vocalizations, and (c) innate behavioral sequences, proposed by the ethological perspective. Based on the reported evidence that supports the formulated thesis, the corresponding theoretical relationships and implications are established. At the end of the chapter, the possible relationships between contagious laughter and happiness are established, as phenomena of phylogenetically ancient origin and related to innate tendencies of positive valence.

Keywords: contagious laughter, positive emotions, emotional contagion, emotional expression, innate, happiness

1. Introduction

The order of this chapter is as follows: first, empirical evidence and arguments about the innate nature of contagious laughter are offered, and then an attempt is made to establish a possible relationship between it and the phylogenetic antecedents that happiness would have, some of which could have common elements with those of this type of laughter [1–4].

Although there may be acoustic and facial expression variations in laughter, in general, laughter is a distinctive and universally recognizable emotional expression [5]; it

has been shown that a wide range of laugh syllable repetition intervals is unambiguously perceived as episodes of this vocalization [6, 7]; in fact, laughter is the only positive emotional vocal expression recognized in all cultural groups and in all latitudes [8].

Laughter can be considered a multimodal activity that is basically expressed through facial expressions, vocalizations, and body movements [9]. The facial expression of laughter, when expressing positive emotions, involves involuntary facial movements of the zygomaticus major and orbicularis oculi muscles [10] and elongation and/or elevation of the corners of the lips, which may or may not be accompanied by mouth-opening [11]. Laughter, as a vocalization, implies the joint participation of the respiratory and subglottic vocal systems; laughter vocalizations include repetitive periods of laughter syllables that occur within a different temporal structure than speech [12]. The body movements that accompany laughter are rhythmic movements of the head, shoulders, and torso that occur during an episode of this vocalization, the amplitude of which varies according to the intensity of the emotion that it provokes [13].

The acoustic study of laughter involves quantitatively determining the following factors: (a) tone: which refers to how high or low this vocalization is perceived. Within this attribute, the fundamental frequency (FO) has special importance; this is understood as the number of times the vocal cords vibrate in a unit of time [14] and there are several acoustic parameters related to them: range of FO, slope of FO, standard deviation of FO on duration of the laughter stimulus [15]; (b) intensity: refers to the acoustic energy with which this vocalization is produced [16]; (c) timbre: it has been defined as the specific qualitative aspects that distinguish each laugh [17]; (d) duration of the different acoustic components of laughter (periods, syllables, episodes and intervals between them) [16] and (e) spectral variables: attributes related to the spectrum of sinusoidal waves in which the sound of laughter can be broken down [18].

Acoustic analysis of laughter can be performed based on laughter episodes, periods, syllables, and segments. The set of laughter periods is called the laughter episode; the periods refer to each of the laughter events produced during an exhalation [19]; each of the sound parts of these periods is called laugh syllables [20] and the laugh segments are the components of this vocalization temporally delimited in the spectrogram [19].

Laughter is a vocalization that the human being shares with other animal species, especially with nonhuman primates [21], whose laughter differs from the human in the syllabic structures and in the respiratory and acoustic patterns of its production, although both share the brain areas that control them [20] and the adaptive functions of this vocal expression: positive emotional expression and improvement of social ties [10].

Although there are different types of laughter, each with particular brain correlates and distinctive facial and acoustic expressions, the main classification of laughter is that which distinguishes between voluntary laughter, or non-Duchenne laughter, and involuntary laughter, or Duchenne laughter, each with a different neural pathway [10]. This distinction is important because it indicates the two great functions that have been attributed to laughter, which can occur jointly or independently: to express emotions spontaneously and non-verbally and to serve as a sign of acceptance or welcome that facilitates social interactions [5].

Duchenne or authentic laughter is a laughter elicited by stimuli that generate positive emotions and a distinctive facial expression; it originates in subcortical regions: amygdala, thalamic and hypothalamic areas, and the dorsal-tegmental areas of the brain stem [22]; human beings have a genetic predisposition to develop this type of laughter from very early ages [10]. In contrast, voluntary laughter or non-Duchenne

laughter is not associated with emotional experience, does not have a distinctive facial expression, and has different acoustic characteristics and brain correlates than authentic laughter [7]; it generally indicates a desire for affiliation, the intention to appease the other or a courteous agreement with the interlocutor, although it can also be emitted with the intention of mocking or attacking others [10].

Within Duchenne laughter, it could locate a subtype of laughter that has received the name of contagious laughter, which, unlike other spontaneous laughter that occurs due to exposure to humorous stimuli, this vocalization is caused by listening to the laughter of other people [1]. Taking this type of laughter as a common thread, this chapter aims to offer empirical evidence and arguments to prove the thesis that contagious laughter and the laughter provoked by it involve a set of acoustic characteristics, affects, emotions, and behavioral patterns that human beings innately bring, which facilitate social interaction with congeners.

The verification of this thesis has both theoretical and practical importance since the pioneering study by Provine [1] on this subject formulated hypotheses about the innate nature of contagious laughter, which have not been verified to date; on the other hand, the verification of the innate nature of this laughter and the laughter/smiles caused by it could shed light on the mechanisms of innate positive social influence, which would enrich the possibilities of practical applications in different social and/or psychological areas.

2. Contagious laughter and the laughter caused by it

Contagious laughter is such a common phenomenon in everyday interactions that for a long time it was not considered an important or interesting object of scientific study. However, Provine [1] saw in the study of this laughter an opportunity to examine one of the typical responses of the human species. For this author, contagious laughter is a liberating stimulus of this same behavior in another person or persons, for which it assumes the characteristics of a typical stereotyped response of the species that would have evolved to facilitate social synchronization [23]. In this same sense, other authors consider that the function of contagious laughter is to facilitate social interaction [2] and the achievement of collective goals [1].

The definition that Provine proposes of contagious laughter as a liberating stimulus indicates the ethological perspective from which this type of vocalization was initially studied. From this perspective and based on the conceptualization of Gómez and Colmenares [4], contagious laughter could be considered an “innate liberating mechanism” that would connect the perception of the sign stimulus with the effector organs of the elicited behavior and the provoked laughter would be a modal action pattern, which would admit a certain degree of variability both at the level of the individual and the species.

Based on the ethological perspective, Provine [1, 24, 25] hypothesizes that through evolution, human beings have developed an innate mechanism detecting contagious laughter that perceives its distinctive acoustic attributes that would automatically trigger the motor pattern of laughter in listeners. This supposed mechanism that would relate to the production and perception of contagious laughter suggests a functional relationship or a parallel evolution between both functions.

In addition to the supposed neural mechanism involved in contagious laughter proposed by Provine [24, 25], which, if verified, would confirm the innate nature of this vocalization, other authors provide direct or indirect evidence on it: Davila-Ross

et al. [26] point out the possible phylogenetic antecedents of this laughter in non-human primate species; Nwokah et al. [27] found evidence on the appearance of this laughter from early stages of human ontogenetic development since they observed that infants under five months present laughter with a latency of less than or equal to 4 seconds and of the same duration as the laughter expressed by the mother; Bard [28] points out that nonhuman primates can replicate the facial and vocal expressions of their conspecifics (including expressions of laughter) with a duration of less than one second to improve affiliation and coordination of activities.

In his original study, Provine [1] verified the existence of contagious laughter and its characteristics. Provine's attempted to test the hypothesis that exposure to exclusively acoustic laugh stimuli would induce laughing or smiling responses in participants. The author took a sample of 128 university students, who listened to 10 contagious laugh audios (taken from laugh-inducing commercial boxes) for 18 seconds. Faced with these stimuli, a little more than half of these subjects reported having experienced laughter or smiles in the first trials, responses that were less frequent in the later trials. On the other hand, he observed that the provoked laughter replicated the motor pattern of the original vocalization and a parallel contagion of the physiological state of the emitter of laughter: respiratory pattern, cardiovascular and autonomic responses, which would suggest that contagious laughter not only implies a social and behavioral synchronization but also a coupling of the physiological state between the members involved in the phenomenon.

Methodologically, Provine's study [1] is weak due to (a) the stimuli used that were not acoustically characterized, (b) the use of self-report to establish the responses of laughter or smile in the participants, and (c) the nonuse of objective measures to assess other physiological responses that could cause these stimuli. Unfortunately, the literature does not report more empirical studies on contagious laughter, with the exception of those reported in this chapter, which tried to overcome the methodological deficiencies of the original study of this type of laughter.

2.1 Appreciation of contagion and acoustic parameters of contagious laughter

Within a perspective that considers contagious laughter as a liberating stimulus, it is relevant to identify the differential acoustic characteristics of this vocalization that have the supposed capacity to provoke the perception of contagion and the response of laughter or smile in other people; however, it was not possible to find a study on this topic. Given this lack of knowledge, the research by Arévalo-Pachón & Cruz [29] described and related the acoustic parameters of more and less contagious laughter stimuli and the perception of their contagion.

The research by Arévalo-Pachón and Cruz [29] selected a sample of 66 acoustic stimuli of adult laughter classified as contagious (33 of male laughter and 33 of female laughter). A third of the male and female laughter stimuli lasted between 4 and 7 seconds; the other, between 8 and 11 seconds, and the last, between 12 and 16 seconds. Laughter stimuli were selected from videos of contagious laughter, approved as such by laughter experts, acoustically cleansed (with Audacity App, version 2.2.2, <https://www.audacityteam.org/download/>), and recorded in WAV format. Laughter stimuli were randomly presented to participants using the program Qualtrics (Qualtrics Provo, UT, versión 2018), which allowed applying the online test to a large number of participants. On the other hand, a convenience sample of 132 university students (84 women, 48 men) under 30 years of age and with normal hearing and vision from the city of Bogotá was taken.

In the first part of the study, the subjects listened to the 66 audios of laughter with headphones and had to rate them according to their appreciation of contagion on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 being no contagion, and 10 being maximum perceived contagion). In the second part of the study, the 66 audios of contagious laughter were acoustically characterized using the PRAAT software, version 6.0.3.7 (<https://Praat.uptodown.com/windows>); the acoustic parameters of all the laughter stimuli were established based on a sampling frequency of 44,100 Hz and with a pitch range of 75 to 550 Hz for women and 75 to 500 Hz for men [16]. Following the recommendations of Wood et al. [15] and Correa (16), about the acoustic parameters to be selected and how to determine their values, 12 acoustic parameters were selected: total duration (s), duration of laughter periods (s), average intensity in the laughter sample (db), average F0, range of F0 (Hz), standard deviation F0/duration (Hz/s), average of the slope of F0 (Hz/s), center of gravity (Hz), average harmonics/noise ratio (Db), average formant F1 (Hz), average formant F2 (Hz), and proportion of unvoiced segments (%).

In this study, it was confirmed that there are male and female laughter stimuli perceived as more contagious than others. Thus, significant differences were observed between the three most contagious female and male laughs ($M = 669.65$) and the three perceived as less contagious ($M = 235.49$): [$t = 11.88(5) p < 0.05$]. Significant differences were also observed between the three female laughs that were more ($M = 645.47$) and less contagious ($M = 238.96$): [$t = 7.33(2) p < 0.05$] and between the three male laughs perceived as more ($M = 693.84$) and less contagious ($M = 232.02$): [$t = 8.93(2) p < 0.05$]. These results confirm the ability of humans to discriminate and qualify the level of contagion of acoustic stimuli of laughter.

Although the three female laughter stimuli qualified as the most contagious present an intensity average higher than the average of this parameter in all the female laughter evaluated, this difference is not statistically significant; on the other hand, the female laugh stimulus perceived as more contagious has the highest value of the proportion of non-voiced segments among all female laughs. As for the three male laughter stimuli qualified as the most contagious, these present average values in duration of laughter periods, average of F0, and an average of the slope of F0 higher than the average of all the male laughter stimuli evaluated. The only one of these parameters that showed significant differences was duration of laughter periods (average time from start to finish of laugh sections separated by inspirations, [30]) ($M = 3.68$, $M = 25.0$, respectively) [$t = -8.44(2) p < 0.05$]. When the three female laughter stimuli rated as more contagious are compared with the three female laughter rated as less contagious, it is observed that the only attribute that shows significant differences between both groups is: the standard deviation of F0/duration (captures moment-to-moment variability in pitch) ($M: 6.71$ and $M: 8.43$, respectively): [$t = -4.76(2) p < 0.05$]. On the other hand, the comparison of the 3 masculine laughter stimuli qualified as more contagious with the three masculine stimuli evaluated as less contagious, allows us to observe that the only attribute that shows significant differences between both groups is duration of periods of laughter ($M: 3.68$ and $M: 1.91$, respectively): [$t = 6.11(2) p < 0.05$]. These results indicate the existence of some acoustic parameters that would characterize the laughter as more contagious or less contagious, which would induce a different laughter response in listeners.

One of the hypotheses that was tested in this research affirmed that “the values of the acoustic parameters that characterize the stimuli of contagious laughter allow to predict the qualifications of appreciation of contagion of these.” This hypothesis was statistically confirmed by means of multiple stepwise regression (dependent variable: contagion scores and predictor variables: average Fo, average range of Fo,

total duration, duration of laughter periods, harmonic ratio/noise, spectral center of gravity, proportion of non-voiced segments, average of F1, average of F2, and intensity). The assumptions of the multiple regression were met satisfactorily. The multiple regression model (with $N = 132$) that was more predictive and significant included the acoustic parameters mean duration of laughter periods (defined in previous paragraphs), mean F1 (points out the influence of the first acoustic resonator on the pitch of laughter [31]) and mean F2 (point out the influence of the second acoustic resonator on the tone of laughter [31]), whose statistical values were: R2 corrected: 0.188 $F = 6.029$ (3, 62) $p = <0.05$. According to the β values of the regressors, the acoustic parameter most predictive of contagion is the average duration of the laughter periods; followed by mean of formant 2 (F2) and mean of formant 1 (F1). This result would confirm the ability of some specific acoustic parameters to explain the perception of contagion caused by some laughs.

As multiple regression analysis shows the duration of the periods of laughter is the predictor of contagion perception with the greatest weight, which suggests that only the prolonged repetition of laughter syllables and other audible and non-voiced elements emitted within the same expiration would largely determine the judgments of appreciation of contagion in the listener. Given that longer periods of laughter are difficult to fake or produce voluntarily [32], this attribute would indicate the spontaneous nature that this laughter must have in order to be perceived as contagious. These results confirm the finding of research by Neves et al. [33] that found that the subjects who report contagion perception in stimuli of laughter tend to be based on the detection of the authenticity of this vocalization. Taking into account that the production and perception of spontaneous laughter are regulated by phylogenetically ancient brain mechanisms [34], this finding suggests the innate character of this type of laughter.

The regression model also includes high values of F1 and F2 as key components for the perception of contagion of this laughter: the high values of F1 suggest that this vocalization is perceived as produced with open vowels [31]; the high values of F2 suggest the positivity with which this laughter is perceived [35] and the high values of F1 and F2 taken together, indicate that this laughter is perceived as a vocalization with a particular and distinctive timbre [17].

In summary, the results of this study indicate that contagious laughter would have distinctive acoustic and perceptual characteristics, which would be related. The relationship between these variables suggests biological preparation and evolutionary molding produce and perceive this vocalization.

3. Capacity of contagious laughter stimuli to provoke positive emotions in the listeners

Given that not all laughter is accompanied by emotion and that laughter caused by contagious laughter can occur in the absence of a humorous situation and without the physical presence of the sender that induces this vocalization, it is not clear whether this vocalization is imitative vocal behavior not accompanied by positive emotions or whether contagious laughter is capable of eliciting these emotions in the listener. Based on this reasoning, the study by Arévalo-Pachón & Cruz [36] aimed to determine whether the acoustic stimuli of contagious laughter, in addition to generating laughter or smile behaviors [1], provoke positive emotions in receptors.

Since joy is a positive emotion compatible with the functions attributed to contagious laughter (facilitating social interaction) [30], this research selected it as

the reference emotion. To determine the presence of this emotion in the different experimental conditions, the following dependent measures were used: (a) facial expressions: The facial expressions of the participants in the different experimental conditions were recorded using the Online video platform Hippo Video (Lyceum Technologies, Pvt. Ltd). Operationally, facial expressions were defined as the percentage of predominant emotions presented by the subjects when exposed to different laugh stimuli measured using the FaceReader software- Noldus Information Technology, bv.; (b) electromyographic (EMG) responses of the zygomatic muscle: electromyographic wave amplitude measured in volts by the “Biopack” hardware and the EMG 100-C module that allows amplifying the signals.

The two audios of female and male laughter rated as more contagious and the two audios of female and male laughter rated as less contagious were taken as laughter stimuli, according to the evaluation made by the 132 subjects of the study by Arévalo-Pachón and Cruz [29]. On the other hand, this study involved 60 university students from the city of Bogotá of both sexes (39 women and 21 men) aged between 18 and 30 years. The sample size was calculated using the GPower software (version 3.1.9.2). The research was carried out individually in the biofeedback laboratory of the Universidad de Los Andes.

The study used a within-subject experimental design in which each participant was exposed to a baseline condition and to different male and female laugh stimuli conditions. The experiment was applied using the OpenSesame program (version 3.2.7 of 2018), which made it possible to standardize the procedure and to control the confounding variables, and take the data of some dependent variables in a synchronized way in baseline and experimental conditions. The 4 contagious laughter stimuli selected were randomly presented with a duration of 12 seconds each, while the responses of the selected dependent variables were recorded. Before applying the experiment, a pilot study was carried out with six university students to whom the complete experiment was applied. This application allowed us to detect flaws in the procedure, instructions, and measurement of dependent variables.

The investigation formulated the following hypothesis: Compared with conditions of baseline and exposure to less contagious laughter stimuli, study participants will show greater facial expressions of joy and greater electromyographic (EMG) amplitude of the zygomatic muscle when exposed to more contagious male or female laughter stimuli. The data that allowed verifying this hypothesis are reported below.

The results of **Table 1** show significant differences in the expressions of joy when comparing the baseline data with those observed when the subjects are exposed to laughter stimuli classified as more contagious and when comparing the data of conditions of more contagious laughter stimuli vs. less contagious laughter stimuli of both sexes. In both comparisons, expressions of joy are significantly higher in exposures to more contagious laughter stimuli.

The significant data related to facial expression are relevant to verify the thesis that is intended to be supported in this chapter, since several authors, such as Maison and Pawlowska [37], have considered facial expression to be the most important form of emotional expression, especially in emotions that are expressed automatically. It is clear that exposure to more contagious laughter stimulus changes the percentage of joy expressions compared to baseline data. This finding indicates that contagious laughter not only has acoustic attributes that would indicate its spontaneity and, therefore, its emotional nature [29], but that the laughter caused by it would also have a clear emotional nature. On the other hand, the significant differences observed in the exposures to the more contagious versus the less contagious laughter could be

Experimental conditions	Mean and standard deviation	Statistical test used
Baseline	M = 0.057 and TD = 0.99	A nonparametric test of Wilcoxon ranges $z = -6.09$ $p < 0.05$
Exposure to more contagious female laughter	M = 0.39 and TD = 0.25	
Baseline	M = 0.057 and TD = 0.10	Test $t(48) = -9.16$ $p < 0.05$
Exposure to more contagious male laughter	M = 0.35 and TD = 0.24	
Exposure to more contagious female laughter	M = 0.39 and TD = 0.25	Repeated Measures ANOVA $F(3,389) = 22.54$ $p < 0.05$ In the pairwise comparison (Wilcoxon) significant differences were found between: the most and least contagious female laughs ($z = -5.36$ $p < 0.05$); less contagious female laughter and more contagious male laughter ($z = -4.67$ $p < 0.05$) and more and less contagious male laughter ($z = -3.59$ $p < 0.05$)
Exposure to less contagious female laughter	M = 0.19 and TD = 0.25	
Exposure to more contagious male laughter	M = 0.35 and TD = 0.24	
Less contagious male laughter exposure	M = 0.24 and SD = 0.23	

Table 1.
Statistical verification of differences between expressions of joy in different study conditions.

Experimental conditions	Mean and standard deviation	Statistical test used and level of signification
Baseline	M = 0.0068 TD = 0.0068	Wilcoxon Rank Test $Z = -6.62$ $p < 0.05$
Exposure to more contagious female laughter	M = 0.0424 TD = 0.0443	
Baseline	M = 0.0068 TD = 0.0068	Wilcoxon Rank Test $Z = -6.71$ $p < 0.05$
Exposure to more contagious male laughter	M = 0.0316 TD = 0.0307	
Exposure to more contagious female laughter	M = 0.0424 TD = 0.0443	Repeated Measures ANOVA $F(2,33137.76) = 14.60$ $p < 0.05$ $\eta^2 = 0.19$ In the pairwise comparison, significant differences were found between the most and least contagious female laughter ($z = -5.44$ $p < 0.05$), more contagious female laughter and less contagious male laughter ($z = -5.26$ $p < 0.05$), more contagious male laughter and less contagious female laughter ($z = -4.66$ $p < 0.05$), less contagious male laughter and more contagious female laughter ($z = -3.84$ $p < 0.05$) and more and less contagious male laughter ($z = -3.84$ $p < 0.05$)
Exposure to less contagious female laughter	M = 0.0208 TD = 0.0262	
Exposure to more contagious male laughter	M = 0.0316 TD = 0.0307	
Less contagious male laughter exposure	M = 0.0212 and TD = 0.0236	

Table 2.
Statistical verification of differences between EMG activity in different study conditions.

interpreted as variations in the intensity of the expressions of this emotion proportional to the variations in the level of contagiousness of the laughter presented.

Based on the observed data on EMG activity in participants exposed to different conditions (**Table 2**), it can be stated that there are significant differences between (a) baseline and the most contagious male and female laughter stimuli conditions and (b) more contagious vs. less contagious laughter stimuli of both sexes.

Although EMG activity does not exactly discriminate the type of emotion experienced by an evaluated subject [27], it has been found that higher electrical activity in the zygomatic muscle is associated with positive effects and emotions (e.g., [38, 39]). Due to its high spatial resolution, facial EMG allows the detection of imperceptible emotional contractions of the zygomaticus for the observer or the emotion recognition software and due to its high temporal resolution, it can detect subtle and rapid changes in the electrical activity of the muscle [36, 38, 40]. Thus, the significant results observed in this study would confirm the emotional nature of the responses provoked by more contagious laughter stimuli and the difference in the intensity of this emotion proportional to the level of contagion of laughter presented.

The results in **Tables 1** and **2** and the observations of the subjects' responses in the different conditions showed that contagious laughter is able to induce an emotion that was not present or was minimally present in the receptors in the baseline condition. The fact that an exclusively acoustic stimulus shows such a capacity indicates its biological relevance and could be considered as supporting the thesis formulated in this chapter. It can be assumed that evolution favored this type of laughter as an inducer of positive emotions in congeners, although as occurs with other innate responses, there are differences in the susceptibility and intensity of receptor responses to this type of laughter [41].

Hatfield et al. [3] considered contagious laughter as a case of primitive emotional contagion, although they did not offer empirical evidence for this assumption; however, the data from this research would offer indirect support to the theory of emotional contagion [3, 42], since this laughter would not only induce this same vocalization in the listener, but also emotional contagion. Specifically, the reported findings would support the hypothesis of emotional contagion through exclusively acoustic stimuli. In this order of ideas, contagious laughter would have acquired an adaptive function that since ancient times would have helped human beings to increase their chances of survival [43] by favoring group cohesion and the achievement of common group goals.

4. Capacity of contagious laughter stimuli to provoke positive effects in the listeners

In previous paragraphs, it has become clear that contagious laughter induces changes in behaviors, vocalizations, and emotions of listeners. At this point, it is intended to report evidence that this type of laughter also induces changes in the effects of the receptors of this vocalization. Within the affective phenomena, affect is related to the assessment or evaluation that a person makes of the stimuli, people, or situations that he/she faces on a daily basis [44]. Given the close relationship between the evaluation of stimuli and the affection generated, the evaluative changes that a person makes of a stimulus associated with contagious laughter stimuli would prove that they have the ability to influence the effects of the people exposed to them.

One of the ways to determine evaluative changes is attitudes, understood as the psychological tendency to evaluate entities, things or people in terms of likes or dislikes, favorability or disfavor [45] and an appropriate way to determine attitudinal changes is through classical conditioning of attitudes (CCA), which allows the formation, intensification or changes of attitudes through the simultaneous presentation of attitudinal objects with stimuli capable of transferring their affective valence [46]. The CCA paradigm involves repeatedly pairing an originally neutral stimulus (which will later be called a conditioned stimulus, CS) with a stimulus with a strong innate affective valence (unconditioned stimulus, US), as a result of this process a change in the valence of the CS will be observed, which will acquire or intensify the positive or negative affective valence of the US [47].

In this order of ideas, the experiment by Arévalo-Pachón and Cruz [48], selected as unconditioned stimuli the most contagious male and female laughter from the study by Arévalo-Pachón and Cruz [29] and as neutral stimuli 2 commercial brands not known in our environment (XUe and XUo) (The neutrality of these brands was empirically established in the study by Noguera [49]), which had the same size, composition colors, and background color.

The study used a within-subject experimental design with measurements before and after the conditioning process. In this experiment, the independent variable was the type of laugh stimulus (laughter more or less contagious feminine and masculine) and the dependent variable was explicit attitudes (they are conscious attitudes susceptible to being reported), measured using semantic differential scales with continuous scales of values between 0 (lowest value) and 6 (highest value), with the following poles: not at all pleasant (0) – very pleasant (6); not at all attractive (0) - very attractive (6); not at all shocking (0) - very shocking (6); not at all interesting (0) - very interesting (6) and not at all satisfactory (0) - very satisfactory (6). For this experiment, a convenience sample of 60 participants was taken (the sample size was calculated using the GPower software, version 3.1.9.2 for a repeated measures ANOVA). The participants were university students aged between 18 and 30 years with normal or corrected vision and hearing conditions. The experiment was applied in the biofeedback laboratory of the Universidad de Los Andes.

In this study, the following hypothesis was formulated: after the process of pairing the neutral commercial brands with the more contagious laughter stimuli, the study participants will present explicit positive or more positive attitudes toward these brands than before this pairing.

The application of the research involved three phases: (a) preconditioning: in this phase, the experiment was designed in the OpenSesame Program (version 3.2.7 of 2018) and the semantic differential scales were constructed; at the beginning of the experiment, the subjects were exposed to the different laugh stimuli to collect baseline data on the semantic differential scales; (b) conditioning: the experiment was applied using OpenSesame, which performed the procedure of simultaneous classical conditioning of attitudes in a standardized and controlled way: 5 pairing tests of the commercial brands XUo and XUe were applied with the most contagious feminine and masculine laughter stimuli, respectively; (c) postconditioning: using the same semantic differential scales used in the baseline, but presented randomly, post-test measures of attitudes toward the various commercial brands were taken. The data that allowed verifying the hypothesis indicated above are reported below.

Table 3 indicates that all the postconditioning attitudinal rating means of the brands paired with the XUo brand are higher than those recorded at baseline. Significant difference between pre/post means was observed in three of these.

Semantic Differential Scales	Baseline Mean	TD Baseline	Pos Mean	Pos TD	Z values and significance
Nice/not pleasant	1,66	1,43	2,09	1,54	Z = -1.517 p = 0.12
Attractive/unattractive	1,38	1,33	2,02	1,61	Z = -2.18 P = 0.02
Shocking/non-impacting	1,2	1,3	1,88	1,51	Z = -2.77 p = 0.006
Interesting/not interesting	1,49	1,33	1,9	1,49	Z = -1.45 p = 0.14
Satisfactory/unsatisfactory	1,28	1,1	2,16	1,56	Z = -3.33 p = 0.00

Table 3.
 Statistical significance of the pre/postconditioning means difference of the semantic differential scales in the rating of the XUo brand using the Wilcoxon test (N = 60).

Semantic Differential Scales	Baseline Mean	Baseline TD	Pos Mean	Pos TD	z values and significance
Nice/not pleasant	1,57	1,33	2,18	1,55	z = -1,91 p = 0,056
Attractive/unattractive	1,45	1,42	2,05	1,42	z = -2,35 P = 0,01
Shocking/non-impacting	1,38	1,34	1,97	1,42	z = -2,13 p = 0,03
Interesting/not interesting	1,48	1,2	2,24	1,43	z = -2,95 p = 0,00
Satisfactory/unsatisfactory	1,55	1,25	2,43	1,58	z = -2,95 p = 0,00

Table 4.
 Statistical significance of the pre/postconditioning means difference of the semantic differential scales in the rating of the XUE brand using the Wilcoxon test (N = 60).

Semantic Differential Scales	Baseline Mean	Baseline TD	Pos Mean	Pos TD	Z values and significance
Ratings on all scales of the semantic differential for the XUo brand	7,02	5,87	10,07	7,16	z = -2,32 p = 0,02
Ratings on all scales of the semantic differential for the XUE brand	7,46	5,45	10,89	6,57	z = -2,58 p = 0,01

Table 5.
 Statistical significance of the pre/postconditioning mean difference in ratings of all the scales of the semantic differential for the XUo and XUE brands using the Wilcoxon test (N = 60).

Table 4 shows postconditioning means greater than preconditioning in all semantic differential scales paired to the XUE brand and significant differences between pre/post means in 4 of them.

Table 5 indicates significant differences between the pre and postconditioning means when the scores of all the semantic differential scales are taken into account for the XUo and Xue brands, which confirms the significance of most of the pre/postconditioning differences when taking each of these scales individually.

Based on the data in **Tables 3–5** it can be stated that the classical conditioning of attitudes that used the most contagious laugh stimuli generated an attitudinal change in the participants in relation to the values observed at baseline. These results confirm the hypothesis formulated in this research and therefore it can be stated that this type of laughter is capable of influencing the effects of listeners.

These results support the findings of other research that indicate that laughter is processed as an affectively charged stimulus [50] that has the capacity to induce positive effects in listeners [6]. In fact, some authors consider that the main function of any laughter is to induce or intensify positive affect in listeners [51, 52] and that laughter with certain acoustic characteristics can influence and shape the effects of its receptors [51]. On the other hand, the results of the research by Arévalo-Pachón and Cruz [48] are in line with the results of the research by Smoski and Bachorowski [52], which showed that the most laugh-provoking laughs are the ones that most are associated with the induction of positive affect in other people.

The evidence from this study on the ability of the most contagious laugh to transfer positive effects to neutral stimuli contributes to supporting the thesis of the innate nature of this laughter and the effects it produces: human beings would be genetically prepared to respond vocally, emotionally and effectively when they hear other people's contagious laughter [53].

Given the possibility that contagious laughter has phylogenetic antecedents in nonhuman primate species [54] and the observed correlation between the activation of audio motor circuits (such as those that would be involved in contagious laughter) and affective changes in nonhuman primates [12], it could be thought that this laughter has evolved and that throughout its phylogenetic history, the induction of positive emotions and affects in congeners caused by this vocalization would have helped ancestral man to face problems of survival and formation and strengthening of human groups [1, 55].

Effective classical conditioning procedures require the use of US with biological significance, which means that they naturally provoke physiological, affective or emotional reactions of sufficient intensity, capable of being transferred to neutral stimuli [56]; in other words, suitable and reliable US must be part of the repertoire of innate reactions of the species. In this order of ideas, the effectiveness of the most contagious laughter as the US that was observed in this research would support the thesis of its innate nature.

5. Possible relationships between contagious laughter and happiness

Although it is clear that happiness is a multidimensional concept that includes several levels, such as life satisfaction, satisfaction with the achievement of goals, and the subjective feeling of well-being, etc. (e.g. [57, 58]), the authors who have delved into the subject agree that one of its main components is the hedonistic, that is, its relationship with pleasure and joy [58] and it is precisely this component that would be related to contagious laughter.

In addition to the fact that frequent laughter is one of the most recognized expressions of joy/happiness [10], which would show its hedonic nature, the relationship that would exist between happiness and contagious laughter would be based on three additional aspects: (a) the tendency of the human being to experience positive affect by default, which would be the basis of both [59, 60]; (b) the fact that both laughter and happiness have positive emotions as an emotional correlate [61–63] and (c) the adaptive personal and social effects generated by both emotional phenomena [64, 65].

Although happiness can be considered a social phenomenon, whose conditions to experience it involve the perceived quality of relationships with others and the internalization of social parameters about its characteristics [66], it cannot be ignored that it is also an individual and complex emotional state of positive valence, which evolved

from simpler phylogenetic expressions. The approach to its phylogenetic origins can enrich the contemporary understanding of it. It is precisely its phylogenetic roots that allow establishing a possible connection with contagious laughter.

Both happiness and contagious laughter would have as their common evolutionary basis the innate tendency of human beings to experience positive affect by default [59], which would be related to tendencies to approach situations that require interaction and cooperation with peers, important for the achievement of survival and reproductive success. Given that evolution generally gives rise to new structures, tendencies, or mechanisms based on existing ones [60], it is very likely that happiness and contagious laughter have developed from the default positive mood, representing expressions of greater intensity and complexity.

From what has been said in previous paragraphs, it is clear that both contagious laughter and the laughter caused by it are accompanied by positive emotions, that is, they are emotional laughters. On the other hand, happiness has been considered as a positive emotional state that is accompanied by positive emotions [61]; in fact, some authors consider that happiness implies frequent experience of positive emotions (e.g., [62]). One of the most important emotions that accompany happiness is joy, which due to its basic and ancestral origin can be considered as the precursor of this positive emotional state: joy and its expression through laughter characterized the pleasant social situations of primitive human and nonhuman species [63]; its ancestral roots and its presence in species phylogenetically related to the human being show the interspecific continuity of positive emotions and their emotional expressions and confirm their innate nature.

Both happiness and contagious laughter generate positive effects for those who experience them and for those who interact with them. Some research has shown that both positive emotional laughter and happiness function as protective factors for physical and mental health [64], which can counteract the negative effects of stress. At the social level, the role of contagious laughter was previously discussed as a factor that promotes group cohesion and cooperation [10], likewise, it is considered that there is a high and complex positive relationship between happiness and social behavior [65].

6. Conclusions

Since there are different types of laughter with different origins and natures, in this chapter it was considered important to address the specific nature of contagious laughter, for which the objective was to offer empirical evidence and arguments to demonstrate that contagious laughter and the laughter caused by it have an innate origin.

In the development of the text, it was pointed out that this type of laughter is shared by human and nonhuman primates [26] and that in humans it appears in the early stages of development [27]. Indirect support was offered throughout the chapter for Provine's [1] hypothesis that there is a receptor mechanism for the particular acoustic attributes of this laugh that elicit its distinctive perception and laugh/smile behaviors in receptors; and directly, the ability of this vocalization to provoke positive emotions and affects was verified. The findings of the investigations reported in this text would be converging evidence on the innate nature of this laughter since it is assumed that only stimuli with a clear biological significance can provoke such a number of responses in the subjects exposed to them [67], who would be innately prepared to react to them.

As indicated or suggested in previous paragraphs, the evidence supporting the innate nature of contagious laughter offers additional support to other theoretical perspectives that might explain the characteristics and scope of this vocalization: (a) ethological perspective, which allows understanding the innate, automatic, reciprocal and relatively invariant relationship between contagious laughter and laughter/smile caused by it; thus, from this perspective, the contagious laughter-provoked laughter relationship could be considered as a typical behavioral sequence of the species [4]; (b) emotional contagion through vocalizations, which is at an early stage of research [68], may also benefit from the evidence presented in this chapter, as it points to the various effects produced by the contagion of exclusively acoustic laugh stimuli; (c) in the controversy sustained by theorists about the function of the acoustic variability of laughter, namely: if it encodes and transmits the emotion of its sender [69] or if the principle function of this is to induce positive emotions or affects in the listeners [70], it is clear that the results reported in this chapter support the second position.

Since contagious laughter possesses distinctive acoustic and perceptual characteristics, generates particular emotional and affective effects and probably has an innate nature, it is likely that this laughter is a distinct vocalization from the other types of laughter already classified and therefore would have different brain correlates of production and perception, evolutionary trajectory and adaptive functions than other types of laughter [10].

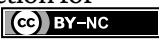
Although the reported evidence was based on psychological research, the observed results have anthropological implications: Based on the results reported in this chapter and the relationship that has been established between contagious laughter and the subject of happiness, it can be concluded that human beings are endowed with innate tendencies of perception and expression of a positive emotional nature, which have been important not only for adaptation to the environment but for the construction of cultures and human groups. However, there is still much to investigate on these trends, which merits a multidisciplinary investigation on the subject.

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Chapter 2

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Children: A Keystone for Happiness in Society

Eleni Hadjigeorgiou

Abstract

Healthy mothers and children are essential to happiness in society. Birth is one of the most complex experiences in a woman's life and the transition to parenthood is an intense period with great rewards but also numerous challenges that might negatively impact the health of the mother, the fetus, and the neonate. A positive birth experience has a far-reaching effect on mothers' and babies' health and wellbeing. Perinatal education empowers women to cope with the changes and challenges of pregnancy and childbirth. Psychological and social risk factors during the perinatal period increase the risk of adverse obstetrical, neonatal, and postnatal complications, while their persistence into the postnatal period compromises mother-child interaction, and the child's physical and neuropsychological development. The aim of this chapter is to examine perinatal care in Cyprus, starting with an outline of perinatal education and continuing with an assessment of mothers' self-reported experiences of perinatal care received. The main objectives are: (1) to explore the mechanisms by which timely and accurate information during pregnancy can decrease the risk of adverse obstetrical, neonatal, and postnatal complications, (2) to assess mothers' needs, and (3) to identify factors in perinatal care that lead to positive birth experiences, family wellbeing, and happiness.

Keywords: healthy mother, children, happiness, society, mothers' experiences, perceptions, needs, pregnancy, birth, childbirth

1. Introduction

Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being and happy individuals tend to interpret and process feelings in a positive way [1]. Pregnancy and childbirth cause a wide range of physical, mental, and social alterations in women. Pregnant women's perceptions and attitudes toward pregnancy are important due to their impact on the individual's mental and emotional well-being [2]. Psychologically healthy women consider the pregnancy as a manifestation of self-actualization [3], feminine identity [4] contemplate gestation as a unique experience, and in most cases feel happy during pregnancy [5].

The birth event itself is a pivotal experience in a woman's life and the transition to motherhood is a multi-level endeavor that influences many aspects of psychophysiological wellness and happiness [2]. In particular, a long-term sense of self-efficacy, what may be termed 'empowerment,' has the potential to be either critically enhanced or critically eroded during this time, via the birthing experience itself, but also through the woman's overall quality of life during the perinatal period [6]. The time leading up to the birth event, the period of recovery and bonding with the neonate which follows, are times of extraordinary physical and psychological fluctuation and change, as well as cognitive development or adjustment [7].

It is not undue to liken a woman's birthing journey to a type of second adolescence—a key developmental milestone, marked by intense bodily changes, fluctuating feelings of expectation, growth and uncertainty, and an emerging identity which determines long-term happiness for the woman herself and influences the trajectory of the family ecosystem [6]. Clearly, it is a period that ought to be skillfully navigated, ideally with adequate support structures already in place, and with ease of access to expert individualized care, perhaps particularly so in the case of a prim gravida.

As with other transitional life events, the perinatal period offers potential for joy and well-being, but it is also a period of heightened vulnerability to various stressors [7]. Birthing itself is viewed by many women as a liminal experience, regardless of low-risk designation. In this context, a feeling of uncertainty over outcomes and re-activation of past traumas can become especially salient for many women [8]. Feelings of anxiety may negatively impact labor progression and the general physical and psychological health of the pregnant mother, the fetus, the neonate, and the family unit [9]. Effectively addressing these normal feelings, preventing them from escalating into phobias, learning and practicing new health-promoting habits and coping skills, and re-kindling a sense of embodiment and internal locus of control, gain paramount importance [7]. Coming to a carefully considered, conscious, informed choice about mode of birth is vital, as is access to evidence-based information at each decision-point [10].

1.1 What is an informed choice about mode of birth, how does it relate to happiness and why advocate for it?

Informed choice is predicated on relevant and balanced information [11]. Women during the perinatal period negotiate a complex array of decision points regarding mode of birth [10]. In this chapter, we shall discuss three basic modes of birth: normal birth, cesarean section (CS), and elective cesarean section (ELCS).

The term 'normal birth' has become a controversial one in the current increasingly medicalized birthing climate [12]. While cultural and socio-economic factors play a role in determining birth choice, there is still a majority of women around the world who express the desire to "birth normally" [13, 14]. Normal birth should not be confounded with vaginal delivery. The term "normal birth" encompasses vaginal delivery but is not limited to this descriptor. In its comprehensive definition, "normal birth" refers to a physiological birthing experience with minimal intervention, including avoidance of excessive monitoring, induction with synthetic hormones, routine episiotomy and IV placement, artificial rupture of membranes, favoring non-pharmacological techniques for labor pain management, mobility, choice of birthing position, spontaneous eating and drinking, and non-extractive delivery [15].

Numerous studies have shown that normal birth is associated with better physiological and psychological outcomes for mother and infant [15–20]. Normal birth is an

inevitable physiological process which has many positive effects, such as timely first contact of mother and newborn, which is crucial for mother-child attachment and the child's optimal psychological development [16]. Recent studies have shown that initial mother-child interactions, such as skin-to-skin, seeing, holding, and feeding the newborn are critical to the psychobiological process of bonding [17–19]. Positive effects have been documented on the newborn's thermoregulation, stress reactivity and autonomic functioning [17–20]. Normal birth has been correlated with prolonged breastfeeding duration and reduced risk of postpartum hemorrhage [21]. The birth experience also has numerous implications for the psychological health of the mother [22].

Cesarean section (CS) is an emergency procedure for saving the lives of women and newborns [23]. Planned CS is also medically indicated for saving the lives of women and newborns from pregnancy and childbirth-related complications, such as umbilical cord prolapse, abnormal lie and presentation, uterine rupture, fetal asphyxia, eclampsia and HELLP syndrome, failure to progress in labor and pathological cardiotocography [23, 24]. Elective cesarean sections (ELCS) are cases where women determine their own acceptable risk level and opt for CS births in the absence of any medical indication [25]. Women who make this choice perceive CS to offer the advantage of enhanced safety and minimized risk, due to the fact that surgery is a controlled, fully planned procedure managed by a medical expert [26].

Most of the women who deliver by CS report substantially lower satisfaction with the birth experience [24] and less positive memories of the birth [25]. Negative birth experiences are associated with postpartum depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and a preference for CS in future pregnancies [22]. CS is also associated with increased risk of uterine rupture in subsequent pregnancies, longer recovery time, longer hospital stays, effects on breastfeeding, pain at incision location, mother and child complication with anesthesia and other heightened maternal risks compared to natural delivery [24]. Babies born by CS have different hormonal, physical, bacterial, and medical exposures that alter neonatal physiology. Short-term risks of CS include altered immune development, increased likelihood of allergy, atopy, and asthma, and reduced diversity in the intestinal gut microbiome [23]. Enhanced preparation and communication and an evidence-based risk-benefits analysis, can reduce women's distress and improve satisfaction with a CS birth [27].

Whether birth mode is normal, emergency, or medically indicated CS or ELCS, self-reports consistently demonstrate that women want a satisfying birth experience. Positive birth experiences have far-reaching implications in a woman's life through safeguarding physical health but also through the psychological pathways of increased self-efficacy [28], sense of mastery and competence [29], achieving a peak experience [30], and increased confidence as a new mother [31].

1.2 Growing tide of medicalized birth

In the current birthing climate, it can be argued that vaginal, un-medicalized birth, is not in fact the worldwide norm any longer. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) [32], 21% of births worldwide happen by CS, up from around 7% in 1990. In many countries, interventions and managed labor techniques are automatic protocols, adhered to regardless of individualized risk assessment of a woman's potential to birth without complications. In many places, even women at extremely low risk are not diligently informed of their right to consent in these precautionary interventions, either in the educational period leading up to the birth or at the birthing facility following the onset of labor [33].

In addition to the shrinking definition of “normal” birth and the dramatic rise in CS deliveries, some countries have seen a steep rise in the phenomenon of non-emergency ELCS. Cyprus is one such country and can therefore be used as lenses for understanding systemic elements that drive and normalize such a hyper-medicalized birthing culture [33]. While the World Health Organization (WHO) has long stated that the emergency CS rate should be between 10% and 15%, in stark contrast, Cyprus has a rate of 56% (2014–2018). This –the highest rate of birth by CS in Europe [32, 33]– comprises a large proportion of cases of non-medically indicated ELCS. Correlated with this Cyprus has a very low breastfeeding rate. The “BrEaST start in life” project was a nationwide study jointly carried out by the Cyprus Breastfeeding Association and Nursing department of Cyprus University of Technology showed that fewer than 20% of women in Cyprus breastfeed exclusively even 48 hours after birth and fewer than 5% for 6 months, which is the WHO’s recommendation [34]. The project also showed fragmented and suboptimal practices across Cypriot maternity clinics in the context of promoting and protecting breastfeeding [35].

The causes for this exceptionally medicalized birthing culture, in which non-emergency managed labor has become a statistical norm, are complex and certainly not adequately explained by the wishes and autonomous choices of women [33]. Contextual factors beyond the scope of the individual woman are at play, including commercialization of medical service provision and a health system skewed toward maximal risk aversion. In this context, many midwives feel it is their ethical duty to advocate for women at low risk of birthing complications who desire a psychologically safe, non-medicalized birthing experience [36].

As part of this venture, two first-time studies on perinatal care were undertaken recently in Cyprus. One is an ethnographic study that has yielded a preliminary description of the culture of parenting preparation classes in Cypriot public and private birthing facilities. The second is a participation in the EU-wide Babies Born Better (BBB) survey which has yielded self-reports of women in Cyprus on their positive or negative birth experiences.

2. Overview of two studies in the cyprus context

2.1 Ethnographic outline of perinatal education in Cyprus: description of the culture of parenting preparation classes in public and private birthing facilities

Pregnant women want to receive comprehensive antenatal education and nulliparous women need opportunities for guidance and transference of knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward perinatal care from midwives [37]. Birthing preparation and parenting classes are vital components of quality antenatal care, guiding parents to be and parents toward health-promoting decisions during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum [38, 39]. Antenatal education has the potential to profoundly influence birth expectations [39] and has been shown to have a positive effect on the health of the family as a whole, by reducing anxiety in pregnant women and increasing partner engagement during labor and birth [40]. A significant factor in happiness is partner relation and marital status [4].

Antenatal classes provide basic knowledge and skills aimed at improving women’s health, reducing the risk of complications, and securing a positive experience of childbirth for couples [41]. However, some countries’ birthing and parenting classes do not meet these learning aims and educational needs [42, 43]. In Cyprus,

antenatal classes are currently offered by the national health system for free and by a few privately operated maternity units, at a cost. Commonly, in the public sector, midwives are responsible for the organization and coordination of antenatal education programs, whereas, depending on the site and the curriculum, a range of health professionals may be involved as instructors in private clinics, such as gynecologists, pediatricians, psychologists, nutritionists, physiotherapists, and others. The structure and curriculum of these programs are not regulated by any central body and as a result, there is considerable variation. Despite numerous studies showing the benefits of antenatal education worldwide [41–43], evidence of the impact of antenatal education in Cyprus is not well-researched. This initial ethnographic study is therefore particularly useful, because it identifies the educational needs of parents-to-be, while simultaneously exploring the effect of prenatal educators' characteristics and the physical learning environment on participants' self-reported satisfaction with the classes.

In order to portray the culture of the antenatal classes in Cyprus, overt non-participant observation was employed by the researcher. The study involved 171 pregnant women and 125 spouses/partners who attended 19 preparation-for-parenthood classes at three separate sites, one public and two private. The participants were informed about the researcher's role and the researcher took field notes during the lessons and used a reflective journal to comment on the experience following each session. The researcher did not contribute to discussions during the antenatal classes.

Data were extracted using multiple methods common to ethnography. Through field notes and the reflective journal, the researcher recorded what happened at each session; the attendance rate; the profile of the attendees; the activities and interactions; and the pregnant women's feelings. Twelve telephone interviews were conducted with the pregnant women after the completion of the antenatal classes. The interviews took the format of a semi-structured interview, based on a recent related literature review. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews aimed to draw out fine-grained information about the participants' experiences and perceptions, and open-ended questions allowed for participants to express their experiences in whatever way was most meaningful to them. The results were used to inform and expand researcher observations. Two independent researchers analyzed the data using an inductive content analysis method, and the results were discussed with a third researcher with the goal of achieving more in-depth analysis. There was no predetermined coding scheme or framework applied to the data. Codes for ideas expressed in the transcripts, the reflective essays, and the observational notes emerged freely through inductive methods. The codes were then grouped into categories and themes.

The majority of the participating women and their partners were Greek-Cypriot. Other pregnant participants were Greek (3), Greek-American (1) and English/Scandinavian (1). The couples attended class dressed casually, most of the women came with their husbands/partners and most of the participants had a tertiary education level. Most participants seemed shy and undemanding; a small subgroup asked questions and requested clarifications, however, many participated in whole group discussions.

Analysis of the data yielded four main themes: (1) Views and opinions about the course (2) Important perinatal topics, (3) Usefulness and reasons for attending and (4) The learning journey. From the researcher's notes, reflective diary, and interviews with participating women, a general picture emerged that although participants valued the classes, they felt their expectations had not been fully met.

The physical environment of the classes emerged as an important parameter for participants. Some of the pregnant women stated that the classroom was not learning-friendly because its arrangement and furnishings were not suitable; the chairs were uncomfortable and, on occasion, the room felt too crowded.

“It would be useful to prepare a room exclusively for this purpose ... To include [pilates] balls, to include cots... and decorate that accordingly.”

The presence of fellow pregnant women in the classes offered an opportunity for mutual support. After classes women reported feeling less anxious and more confident in their capacities. Social support has been proven to be an important component of perinatal care in a similar setting, the CenteringPregnancy® group model of prenatal care [44]. Nolan study [42] has shown women’s preference for small group learning in which they are offered opportunities to interact with each other, as well as the educator, and to link the learning material to personal situations. The current study also highlighted the fact that husbands/partners were supportive throughout the process, which was very empowering for the pregnant women. It was apparent that participation in the lessons was mutually beneficial as the men gained an understanding of the pregnant women’s needs. During lessons, one midwife would ask everyone to stand up, and would direct the husbands/partners to hold their wife’s/partner’s hands in order to practice patterned breathing. This visibly aided the bonding of the couple. Most husbands/partners were absent from the breastfeeding class. The researcher hypothesized that the husbands/partners believed breastfeeding issues to be a matter which was not of their concern.

Educator characteristics were of primary importance for participants. It was evident to the researcher that the fact that instructors in various topics were professionals in their fields promoted a sense of trust and heightened appreciation for the educator. This is in line with studies that have shown that the attitudes, demeanor, skills, and characteristics of health care professionals are very important for pregnant women [42, 45]. Pregnant women in the current study likewise mentioned that the attributes of health care professionals mattered considerably [39].

“...Due to their specialized knowledge... they provided us with scientifically based answers.”

“The educators were very helpful. We could ask any kind of question... they were close to us; we did not feel uncomfortable... They were very approachable.”

The main format of the classes was lecture-style, that is, the educator presented information via PowerPoint, sometimes using audiovisual material. Some instructors gave out occasional written information in the form of leaflets or booklets, on topics such as nutrition and neonate vaccinations. Participants stated that written information was useful. Some participants, however, stated a preference for an interactive teaching style, use of props and equipment, doing exercises, group activities and role-playing, which they found to be more engaging, personalized, and suitable for developing practical skills.

Participants requested discussion of certain topics more frequently than others and nutrition during pregnancy was one such topic. Many women were highly interested and asked many questions. It was evident to the researcher that the midwives observed in this study did not have enough knowledge and skills to provide

adequate or personalized advice about nutrition. This was also noted by participants in the semi-structured interview. Midwives are known to play an important role in the promotion of healthy eating, but they need support from nutrition experts in order to individually advise women on the topic [46].

Another salient topic for pregnant women and their partners was the act of birth itself. Participants asked questions about different methods of birthing, labor pain management, how to psychologically cope during labor, and the storage of umbilical cord blood. The researcher felt there was an observable need for greater detail in information given to the women on birthing methods.

“Personally, I would like to know some specific information...about the process of induced labor, how it is done... the pros and cons of a cesarean section.”

Medicalization of childbirth has led to a steady rise in the prevalence of CS in Cyprus over the past 8 years. Evidence-based, unbiased advice from healthcare professionals strongly influences a woman’s choice of birthing mode [47]. The role of midwife, as advocate for normal birth, however, is not always appreciated in Cyprus by pregnant women, the healthcare system, and the obstetricians [33, 47]. In a study conducted in Turkey, which also has a severely medicalized birthing culture, women reported they requested ELCS due to fear of labor pain [48]. This study also suggested that the percentage of women with fear of childbirth, the severity of fear, and requests for ELCS, can all be reduced when better education on labor pain mitigation and management is offered to women, and this is likely also the case for Cyprus.

The ethnographic study also determined that attendance in antenatal courses is low compared to the numbers of prim gravida per year in Cyprus and courses are not adequately promoted. Given the potential long-term health benefits of such courses for mothers as well as children, this should alarm policymakers. Birthing culture in Cyprus operates predominantly in a milieu modeled on a doctor-patient relationship and is characterized by ultimate authority of the obstetrician and physician dominance of communications surrounding pregnancy and the birthing experience. The result is that information processing for mothers-to-be is limited to brief one-on-one doctor-patient style interactions. In this context, low participation in antenatal classes becomes even more troubling.

This study identified the need for parents-to-be to be provided with more information and practical examples on important topics. Pregnant women in the study expressed the need for realistic information taught by professionals specialized in their fields. The role of midwife as coordinator of perinatal education is imperative, however, related health care professionals complement the midwife’s role. Raising the profile of public health support programs available to pregnant women has the potential to greatly improve Cypriot women’s perinatal literacy and health. Implementation of a high-quality, standardized perinatal curriculum, should be prioritized within the framework of the national healthcare system. For maximum societal health gains, such a curriculum should be oriented toward the family unit as an ecosystem, addressing the educational needs of all its members: the expectant mother, the newborn, and the husband/partner or whoever constitutes the woman’s primary support system.

A final significant theme emerging from the current study was a strongly felt gap in postpartum care. As one mother put it: “After you have the baby, you’re deserted.” The postnatal period, another important health education opportunity, as well as a potential point of contact for identifying psychosocial stress factors and

offering timely interventions, is thus also a currently neglected aspect of public healthcare in Cyprus.

2.2 Mothers' self-reported experiences of labor and perinatal care in cyprus: babies born better (BBB) survey

Several factors influence women's experiences during childbirth [49, 50]. Sufficient information, respect, breast-feeding guidance, and skin-to-skin contact, positively affected women's experience [50]. Staff confidence, adequate analgesia, and continuity of care also contributed positively. Health care providers' personality and availability were other contributing factors [51]. Another survey found that during labor 69.8% of women were systematically informed of their progress; 77.6% said their vaginal examinations were done gently; 39.4% were allowed to eat and drink; 79% had skin-to-skin contact with their baby immediately after birth and 96.7% received the necessary help and support for breastfeeding. These factors contributed to 55% of women feeling fully satisfied with their care [52]. Most mothers worldwide currently give birth with interventions that affect their capacity to experience birth positively [32, 49, 53].

The second study is a part of the Babies Born Better (BBB), an online mixed survey, funded by the European Union, involving the participation of researchers from 26 European countries, as well as Australia, China, and South Africa. The project aims to enhance scientific knowledge and provide ways of improving maternity care and outcomes for mothers, babies, and families. The present study utilizes data from Cyprus' participation in the BBB survey and project. The wider survey was conducted in two phases. The first phase was initiated in 2012 and completed in 2015. The second phase was conducted from March to August 2018, with the participation of 44,628 mothers worldwide. The Cyprus BBB study is part of the second phase where a mixed methodology was employed using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The mixed method study included 360 mothers aged 18 and above who resided in Cyprus and had given birth in the previous 5 years. The mothers were recruited through social media and virtual communities of practice, such as maternity clinics, where they were informed of the survey by midwives.

A total of 360 women participated during the period from March to August of 2018. The majority of the participants (45.1%) were 28–33 years old and 34–39 (47.4%). Only 7.5% were older than 40 years of age. With regards to education, 73.1% of mothers had completed 11–15 years of education, 26.9% 16–20 years. According to official statistics, 67.7% of mothers giving birth in Cypriot maternity clinics have post-secondary education. With regards to employment status, 87.5% reported being employed and 12.5% reported being unemployed. Employment status and family income are not reported in official statistics to allow a comparison. The proportion of mothers with one child versus two children or more was similar: 49.4% and 47.5%, respectively.

The majority of participating mothers (72.2%) gave birth in private clinics. In terms of mode of birth, the proportion of mothers who gave birth vaginally is identical to those who underwent CS at 39.2%. The CS rate of the women surveyed was lower than the officially published general population data (56.9% in 2018). In terms of satisfaction with their birth experience, 50% of women reported they had the best experience during birth and only 6.1% said they had the worst birth experience.

Qualitative data analysis was carried out using inductive content analysis which is a systematic and objective method designed to describe a phenomenon in depth

in order to make it more understandable. Five themes emerged from the inductive analysis of the data: (1) relationship with health professionals, (2) establishment of breastfeeding, (3) childbirth rights, (4) birth environment and care and (5) choice of birth mode. These themes highlight the pivotal role of health care professionals in promoting a positive birthing experience both during and after labor.

Mothers identified the experience and expertise of health care professionals as being essential to their sense of trust and safety. One mother explained:

“My health care professionals are experienced; they have the necessary knowledge... I feel safe as I trust my doctor and my midwife during pregnancy and especially during childbirth.”

When asked what improvements they wished to see, however, many mentioned interesting examples of poor care:

“[The] doctors are thinking of money. There is no cooperation between mothers, doctors, and nurses and it seems that they do not care much.”

Mothers who reported a negative birth experience stated they felt a lack of humanity, support, bonding, and safety with their healthcare providers; an insufficient presence of the doctor; abuse of authority and psychological manipulation; a feeling of being simply a source of money; and being exploited while in a vulnerable situation. One mother characteristically stated:

“When the doctor first examined me at birth...she shouted at me that I must follow her orders. I was very shocked; no one ever spoke to me like that. Because I could not speak between contractions... I was alone and could not defend myself...I was very hurt, and I felt that I was in a vulnerable position.”

Another main issue identified by participants was the lack of maternal involvement in decision-making around the mode of birth and labor care. Women emphasized how important it was to them that their choices and desires were acknowledged and implemented. One mother described how difficult it was for her to be allowed the birth mode she had chosen:

“My choice to give birth with VBAC was a battle for me with my doctor because VBAC is not allowed at this maternity clinic, but eventually they let me give birth with VBAC.”

Another mother said her choices were partially respected: *“Most of the time I could decide.”* Other women spoke more positively about more respectful care. One stated that she had received respectful care from her doctor and explicit opportunities to give consent:

“The doctor respected me and always asked for my consent, he was very supportive.”

Many of the mothers surveyed asked for support toward normal childbirth, avoidance of unnecessary interventions, and performance of CS only when absolutely necessary. They specifically suggested that health care professionals should have a more humane approach and pay attention to their feelings. Mothers stated they

wished to see improvements in the physical birth environment, in particular, they would have wanted to a friendly environment, to have single rooms with ensuite toilet and a bathtub, an esthetically pleasing maternity ward, and availability of natural methods of labor pain mitigation, such as music and the presence of partner. Mothers also mentioned they would have chosen a water birth. Their requests echo another study where recommendations for improvement by mothers were also related to the birth environment, with space available for natural childbirth without interventions, where mothers would have more control over their birth, and more support and understanding from health care professionals.

The evidence from the Cyprus BBB survey starkly highlights the need for change in maternity care in Cyprus, even in private clinics. Expectant mothers in Cyprus want their childbirth rights safeguarded, better support from health care professionals, and more humane care.

2.2.1 Positive experiences during childbirth

The most positively experienced category in maternity practices was “care received and experienced” with 35.4% of participants rating it as an important contributing factor toward their positive experience. The second most frequently mentioned category was “specific interventions and procedures” such as pain management with an epidural with 18.0% of respondents rating it as contributing positively. The category “Care team” was ranked third in importance with 17.3%, followed by the category “environmental conditions” with 7.4%. About 15.8% of the participants provided no information on factors leading to positive childbirth experiences.

Overall care of both mother and baby were mentioned as important criteria of a positive childbirth experience. In the category, “care received and experienced,” the subcategory “support and accompaniment” received the most responses of having been positively experienced with 30.9%. Mothers mentioned psychological support and encouragement, as well as practical and instrumental support provided to them during labor. The subcategory “overall maternity and childbirth care” was ranked second with 26.1%. The subcategory “professional behavior and attitude” was ranked with 21.83%, referring to patient-health care professional relationships and interactions in terms of kindness, care, friendliness, understanding, respect, and staff calmness. The third most frequent subcategories were “staff time and availability” and “respectful care, intimacy, and sense of agency” with 8.7%. Continuous availability of staff, frequently commented by mothers as contributing to a positive experience.

In the category “specific interventions and procedures”, 49.2% of mothers rated breastfeeding support and guidance about three times more important than normal birth facilitation without interventions (18.8%). Most responses on normal birth facilitation focused on normal birth. Good maternity practices to support breastfeeding were ranked third with 23.4%, referring to rooming-in and skin-to-skin.

2.2.2 Recommended changes for birth and post-natal care in Cyprus

Negative aspects mentioned by Cyprus BBB survey respondents were numerous and interesting (**Table 1**). Specific interventions were the most frequently mentioned category with 18.6% of respondents mentioning them. The category “no change required” was ranked second with 16.0% followed by “care received and experienced” with 13.5%. In the category “specific intervention and procedures”, subcategory “normal facilitation without interventions” received the most responses with 39.36%,

followed by “support to breastfeeding” and “effective medical interventions” with 31.91% and 19.15%. With regards to the subcategory “normal facilitation without interventions”, the most frequent responses emphasize the medicalization of child-birth and the desire of mothers to give birth normally. In the second subcategory, “support to breastfeeding,” mothers referred to the lack of support for breastfeeding, lack of guidance, inadequate knowledge, and motivation on the part of their health care professionals.

With regards to care experienced and received, most responses referred to Professional Behavior and Competence (27.94%). Mothers mainly referred to the need for the adoption of a more humane approach from health care professionals and the development of empathy. Second in rank was the subcategory “support and accompaniment” (20.60%), describing the need for the provision of support in many of its forms including informational and emotional support during labor. About two out of 10 women referred to the need to be listened to as far as their preferred child-birth mode and the development of a birth plan.

3. Discussion

The medicalized character of the health care system in Cyprus does not provide any of feelings of safety, support, and empathy to pregnant women and mothers. The lack of humane approach, support, bonding, insufficient presence of the doctor, abuse of power and psychological manipulation [33, 36], feeling of being sources of money, feeling of exploitation of mothers in a vulnerable condition [54] all point to the urgent need for the development of a perinatal care system that provides for inclusion of pregnant women and mothers in decision-making processes, on the basis of their explicitly expressed needs [55–57].

The first ethnographic study in Cyprus offered a description of the culture of birth preparation and parenting courses. According to the researcher’s notes, reflective diary and interviews of the participating women, there was a general impression that although the participants found the antenatal courses useful and valuable, their expectations remained unfulfilled. The physical environment of the classes, the educators’ characteristics and the limited topics covered, were the most important emerging parameters. Some of the pregnant women reported that the classroom setting was not learning-friendly because its arrangement was not suitable for such lessons; the chairs were not comfortable for pregnant women and occasionally there were too many people in the room. An esthetic and comfortable environment has been shown in a previous study to help pregnant women feel content [43].

Pregnant women expressed the need for realistic and trustworthy information. Educator’s characteristics played a major role in the opinions of participants. The importance of specialized topics being taught by health care professionals who were specialists in their fields was also highlighted. The role of the midwife in perinatal education is imperative, however other health professionals could offer educational sessions on sub-specialty topics. The presence of fellow pregnant women in classes gave women an opportunity for mutual support. It also seemed to empower women to face the normally expected risks and helped them receive comprehensive support, which in turn guided their own perinatal experience [42]. It is worth noting that in perinatal education classes there are no lessons on formula feeding. The experience of mothers who choose to use formula is largely overlooked in many countries [58]. Mothers make decisions about infant feeding based on a variety of factors, the most

1. Care received and experienced	
Overall care received and experienced	<p>Positive Statements: Positive assessment of the care and assistance received before, during, and after birth to the mother as well as to the newborn.</p> <p>Negative Statements: lack of care or negative evaluation</p>
Support or help provided	<p>Positive Statements: any type of support or help provided (Informational, emotional)</p> <p>Negative statements: insufficient or lack of any type of support or help</p>
Effective communication	<p>Positive Statements: effective communication with health care professionals with the use of various communication skills (e.g. active listening, guidance, advice)</p> <p>Negative Statements: no communication or lack of communication skills; a conversation among professionals without including the women</p>
Trust and safety	<p>Positive statements: Mothers feel secure and confident with the behavior and actions of Health care professionals</p> <p>Negative Statements: Lack of security and trust</p>
Courtesy, Respect during Care	<p>Positive Statements: consideration of maternal choices, needs and desires, respecting the right to choose and to decision-making</p> <p>Negative Statements: Insufficient or lack of the above. Paternalism, coercion, or threats</p>
Professional behavior and Competence	<p>Positive statements: When health care professionals are empathetic, thoughtful, considerate, caring, friendly, companionate, kind, attentive, dedicated</p> <p>Negative Statements: Insufficient or lack of the above attributes. Dehumanization or depersonalization</p>
Time and availability	<p>Positive Statements: HCPs readily available, continuous presence of HCPs (obstetrician or midwife), sufficient time and commitment provided, enough time required for labor provided</p> <p>Negative Statements: insufficient time spent, commitment, presence, availability, continuity</p>
2. Involvement of members of care team	
Involvement of health care professionals	<p>Positive Statements: when the involvement of any health care professional with any expertise (or a specific person) has been considered to Negative Statements</p>
Professional competence and interdisciplinarity	<p>Positive Statements: professionalism, competence, experience expertise, qualifications, specific knowledge, and skills, interdisciplinarity, teamwork, and team dynamics</p> <p>Negative Statements: insufficient acquisition or lack of the aforementioned attributes</p>
Presence of the partner in labor	<p>Positive Statements: presence or involvement of a parent (or other accompanying person) at birth</p> <p>Negative Statements: poor level or lack of involvement</p>

3. Use of interventions or processes during or after labor	
Facilitation of vaginal birth without any intervention	<p>Positive Statements: facilitation of vaginal birth with few or no interventions and absence of invasive procedures; demedicalization; free movement during labor; Consideration of birth plan</p> <p>Negative Statements: interventions value negatively (type and quantity); Non-recommended or unnecessary procedures are used. Obsolete protocols and their obligatory application</p>
Effective medical interventions	<p>Positive Statements: quick and timely response of medical staff during labor; reduction of pain by anesthesia; any medical intervention that is valued positively</p> <p>Negative Statements: lack of medical interventions; ineffective procedures; delayed response</p>
Support to Breastfeeding	<p>Positive Statements: Emotional Support/Appraisal, information (giving advice)</p> <p>Negative Statements: insufficient or lack of any kind of support</p>
Bonding Practices	<p>Positive Statements: skin-to-skin, rooming-in, and any practice that promotes an uninterrupted bond with the baby</p> <p>Negative Statements: insufficient or lack of any of the above items</p>
4. Environmental conditions	
Settings, infrastructure, and resources	<p>Positive Statements: the place of birth and postnatal ward; single rooms; equipment</p> <p>Negative Statements: poor quality or lack of the above</p>
Experience during their stay at the maternity wards	<p>Positive Statements: general atmosphere in the labor and the ward (silence/ music, temperature, illumination); Accommodation, visiting times, cleanliness, quality</p> <p>Negative Statements: poor quality or lack of above items</p>

Table 1.
Thematic areas and categories developed during analysis.

salient of which are infant health, cultural context, social support, practical and other implications for the mother, and knowledge about infant feeding [59]. Mothers' criticisms of how infant-feeding recommendations are framed by health care professionals and policymakers, highlight a need to address formula feeding in a more balanced, woman-centered manner [58].

In countries with advanced development and technology-dependent healthcare systems, women's perceived choices during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as the choice of the information offered during perinatal education are, at least to some degree, dictated and uniformly managed by the cultural norms and interests of the overarching system. In a study conducted in Ireland, most women reported not having the choice in the model or location of their maternity care, but nonetheless being involved enough in decision-making, especially during birth. Women who were in a position to receive private maternity and birth care reported a higher sense of choice

and control [60]. In Cyprus, many women are, similarly, not in a position to opt for private maternity care, or determine its model or location, however, mothers-to-be expressed a sense of inadequate involvement in decision-making, be it in the public or the private care sector.

The second study concluded that the mode of birth was one of the main components of either positive or negative childbirth experience. Mothers referred to normal birth as a component contributing to positive experiences. On the contrary, CS has most frequently been viewed as a contributor toward a negative experience. Cyprus ranks first in combined CS and ELCS among other European countries at 56% [60]. Normal birth is accompanied with emotions of happiness and empowerment, while CS has been associated with feelings of fear, pain and stress, agony, and disappointment [36] often resulting in a traumatic childbirth experience.

Mode of birth also appears to influence the nature of the first moments of mother-baby contact. Normal birth is followed by an immediate sensory connection between the mother-infant dyad, but CS may either partially or wholly deprive the dyad of important sensory connection immediately after birth [12]. However, a highly significant finding showed that mothers who undergo CS but do experience skin-to-skin, have a more positive childbirth experience than those who give birth vaginally, without experiencing skin-to-skin [61–63]. Health care professionals play a critical role in either positively or negatively influencing women's experiences of childbirth, through either the presence or absence of support, professionalism, competency, effective communication, and respect. These findings agree with previous studies, where the quality of interaction with health care professionals has been identified as a cornerstone for positive birth experiences [55, 56], embedded in a holistic health system supported by suitable facilities [64].

A supportive and respectful environment provides a sense of control and safety during labor and increases maternal self-confidence, resulting in a positive experience of [62]. According to Preis et al. [65], greater control has been associated with positive emotions, which develop as a result of maternal involvement in decision-making and provision of information on personal security and physical functioning [66]. On the other hand, a feeling of lack of control does not allow for a positive experience [62]. Women emphasized the importance of both physical and emotional support. Lack of support may lead to overall childbirth dissatisfaction and low levels of confidence, due to feelings of isolation and the devaluation of women's needs and preferences. On the contrary, both professional and family support may enhance maternal confidence and allow women to feel that they are being considered [54].

Both studies indicate that women wish midwives to gain a pivotal role in perinatal care in Cyprus. Midwives are able to offer continuous support and guidance during pregnancy, labor /birth as well as postnatally, to create a trustful relationship and to empower women, and increase the possibility of a positive birth experience [67]. Provision of emotional and psychosocial support, practical help and guidance during labor/birth as well as postnatally has been flagged by mothers as an important ingredient for best maternity services.

The different model of care provided by midwives and obstetricians shows a preference of women toward the midwives in Cyprus. Midwives offer a woman-centered model of childbirth care [68] characterized by equality between the women and their midwives [69] and the avoidance of unnecessary interventions [70] in comparison to a more medicalized hierarchical care as provided by obstetricians and supported by the overall culture of the health care system in Cyprus [33].

4. Conclusions

Childbirth is a physiological process characterized by a plethora of emotional, physiological, and psychological changes that are vital for maternal adaptation and transition into the new role of motherhood. Mode of birth has potentially long-lasting effects on mothers and neonates' health. Mothers who experienced CS were more likely to perceive their birth experience as negative, especially in terms of their sense of control and bonding with the newborn, and they felt more concerned, insecure, and had lower self-confidence. Several factors influence women's experiences of childbirth such as sufficient information, respect, skin-to-skin contact, and breast-feeding guidance, positively affecting women's experiences. Staff confidence, adequate analgesia, and continuity of care also contributed positively. Health care providers' personalities and availability were also contributing factors.

Perinatal education enables women to experience birth as a source of empowerment and happiness. There is not always an agreement in the perception of what is important information between health professionals and parents-to-be/new parents. Expectant parents will benefit more if perinatal education emphasizes the information, they themselves seek out and feel it is important to know and expect to receive information in a more woman-centered manner. Thus, in order to design effective antenatal education programs, it is imperative to further explore the expectations of pregnant women. Antenatal education programs (conventional or web-based) must be re-designed using participatory action-research approaches, in order to take into genuine consideration, the expressed needs, wishes, and concerns of pregnant women. In underperforming settings, the need for improvement is particularly pronounced due to a lack of formal systems and policies, lack of continuity of care, ineffective and non-socially inclusive antenatal courses, and weak community support systems.

Existing examples of evidence-based, women-centered midwifery care and a longstanding tradition of deep understanding of women's childbirth experiences, highlight the incongruity of the highly medicalized character of maternity services, such as those currently prevalent in Cyprus. In response to this, policymakers should promote a strategy for timely and accurate information to be offered to women during pregnancy so as to minimize the risk of adverse obstetrical, neonatal, postnatal complications and interventions, as well as negative experiences such as loss of control, thereby protecting happiness. In Cyprus, where care during labor and birth is highly managed and characterized by increasing intervention, it is vital to implement practices that have shown positive results in other European countries. Further research to identify mothers' needs will lead to better individualized design of ante-natal courses and more suitable course environments. Finally, elucidating the factors in perinatal care that lead to positive birth experiences, family well-being and happiness, can support this crucial endeavor. A global approach to quality and equitable maternal health, supporting the implementation of respectful, evidence-based care for all, is urgently needed.

Midwives in Cyprus do not have a substantial amount of influence regarding perinatal health policy. This pattern is also observed in some other European countries where hierarchical structures accord obstetricians greater value than midwives. Nonetheless, midwives in Cyprus do have structured healthcare entry points and opportunities for pre-emptive intervention aimed at safeguarding informed choice and increasing the chances for women to experience birthing as a positive and

life-affirming event. If midwives manage to position themselves in the existing healthcare system, as the primary providers of high-quality evidence-based perinatal education; if they can optimally design and tailor perinatal course content to maximize quality care time spent with pregnant women, they will be able to enhance the effectiveness of their role not only in shielding women's psychosocial wellbeing but in preserving the potential for birthing to be lived as a peak lifetime experience. This concept of a "peak lifetime experience" was originally articulated by Abraham Maslow [71], who, in his theory of self-actualization describes peak experiences as "*rare, exciting, oceanic, deeply moving, exhilarating, elevating experiences that generate an advanced form of perceiving reality and are even mystic and magical in their effect upon the experimenter.*" If midwives can hold space for greater numbers of women to experience birthing like this, they will surely be laying a keystone for the promotion of happiness for women, children, families, and society.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes/thanks/other declarations

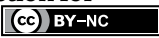
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Chapter 3

The Well-Being in the Children and Adolescents with ADHD: Possible Influencing Factors and How to Improve It

Jenson Yin and Jie Luo

Abstract

In recent years, academics have increasingly emphasized the importance of research into the well-being of children and adolescents. This is because well-being plays an important role in the development of children and adolescents. The literature reports that high levels of well-being facilitate positive functioning in children and adolescents. They contribute to the overall development of the individual and are a key factor in helping children and adolescents to integrate into society. ADHD, the most prevalent neurodevelopmental disorder, affects more than 5% of children and adolescents, and the distress caused by its symptom can seriously undermine the well-being of children and adolescents. Therefore, this chapter discusses this noticeable issue focusing on the following key parts: An understanding of the well-being in children and adolescents, the factors that affect the well-being of children and adolescents with ADHD, and how to improve the well-being of children and adolescents with ADHD.

Keywords: well-being, child and adolescent, ADHD, factors

1. Introduction

Children and adolescents are the future of every country, and their physical and even psychological health is a place where every country attaches great importance. In recent years, scholars around the world have done a lot of research on the mental health of children and adolescents, and they have found that well-being plays an important role in the healthy psychological process of children and adolescents, which can not only help individuals better integrate into society, but also lay a good foundation for the further development of individuals. In the process of studying the mental health of children and adolescents, a large number of scholars have found that mental illness has a huge impact on individual well-being, of which ADHD is one of several common childhood psychiatric disorders.

ADHD is the most common neurodevelopmental disorder, affecting more than 5% of children and adolescents in the world, and the pain caused by its symptoms can

seriously damage the well-being of children and adolescents, which in turn affects the process of their integration into society and the process of self-development [1]. This chapter focuses on the following points: sources of well-being in children and adolescents, factors that affect the well-being of individuals with ADHD in children and adolescents, and how to improve the well-being of individuals with ADHD.

2. What is well-being?

Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and the ability to manage stress. More generally, well-being is just feeling well.

Well-being is something sought by just about everyone because it includes so many positive things—feeling happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful. Unfortunately, well-being appears to be in decline in ADHD children. Children with ADHD have a marked decrease in happiness, and this status quo in turn affects the symptoms of ADHD [2].

3. Sources of well-being for children and adolescents

Well-being is the best state that a whole individual can present, we often link people's mood, such as happiness and healthy, with well-being, for children and adolescents, the source of well-being is also relatively simple: 1. school, 2. family. Among them, the school can also be divided into several major blocks: peer relationship, teacher-student relationship, and learning ability. The family aspect is simpler: the degree of harmony of the family. Next, I will analyze them one by one:

1. Peer relationships: In childhood and adolescence, in both Eastern and Western countries, peer relationships are an important part of the individual's social function, even beyond family relations. In China, in addition to sleep time, a child's time is about 14 hours, of which the time spent with parents or siblings is generally no more than 6 hours, and half of these 6 hours may be busy, and the time to actually sit down and chat maybe even less. In Western countries, children also communicate more with their peers and with their parents as they grow up, so peer relationships are destined to be an important part of the social function of the individual during this period [3]. The well-being index brought about by good peer relationships is very high, and can even help individuals counteract negative energy from other aspects. For a simple example, the most common problem of individuals in adolescence is rebellion, so most individuals will have discord in family relations, and the peer relationship at this time will play a great role in regulating and helping individuals get out of the haze, at this time, the discord of family relations will have a minimal impact on the social function of individuals, at least in school, there will be no great fluctuations, but on the contrary, peer relationship discord will have the most direct impact on various social functions in school life.
2. Teacher-student relationship: The teacher-student relationship is a dynamic system consisting of different levels of relationships between teaching, psychology, individual, and ethics. Scholars have both macro and micro perspectives on the

definition of the teacher-student relationship, under the macro perspective, the teacher-student relationship has two attributes social relationship and natural relationship, and in its social relationship attribute, the teacher-student relationship is a dynamic system composed of different social subsystems. From a micro perspective, the teacher-student relationship is regarded as an educational relationship in school educational activities [4]. The teacher-student relationship also has an indispensable role in the development of children and adolescents, and a good teacher-student relationship brings not only progress in learning to individuals, but also a sense of security, and the basis of well-being is safety. Only in a safe environment can individuals further discover the beauty of social interaction and will have a sense of well-being. In addition, the teacher is also the “guardian” of the student’s mental health, usually, the first to find that the student has psychological problems is the peer or teacher, and the real can help solve the problem is usually the teacher, because for the individual, although the peer can talk about everything, the ability to solve the problem is limited, the family has the ability to solve the problem, but some things of the individual are not willing to share with the family, and the teacher is such an intermediate role, can be trusted, but also has the ability to solve the problem.

3. Learning ability: Children and adolescents inevitably need to face the problem of learning ability, even in Western countries, this aspect is also very important. Naturally, individuals will have more or less problems in this regard during this period, such as declining grades and not keeping up with the average level of the class, then the individual’s emotions will inevitably be affected, and the accumulation of negative emotions will cause a decline in well-being, and further aggravate the learning problem, resulting in a vicious circle. On the contrary, individuals with better grades will be recognized by the teacher’s family and classmates, on the one hand, they will get spiritual rewards, on the other hand, they will also urge themselves to continue to cheer, form a good cycle, and enhance well-being.
4. Family relations: Family relationship is the most important relationship in the family, parents’ occupation, education level, parenting style of children and parents’ own awareness, etc., are directly in this relationship on the child’s future physical and mental development has an important impact, is the core factor in children’s growth. Some studies have pointed out that the construction of parent-child relationships from the perspective of positive psychology requires democratic equality in family parenting methods, sincere and fraternal communication between family members, harmonious nature in the field of family education, and pluralistic wisdom of family education methods [5]. During childhood and adolescence, the love and help that an individual receives at home is a source of well-being, and good family relationships play an integral role in the growth of individuals [6]. There is a clear difference between a child who comes out of a harmonious family and a child who comes out of a chaotic family, and the probability of suffering from mental illness is also different. For children and adolescents, a good family relationship will make children have a strong foundation, will not be humble when getting along with people, and will better integrate into society. On the contrary, the more chaotic family relationships will lead to problems with the child’s personality, either too cowardly or too grumpy, and the defects of the character will cause damage to the individual’s social function in the future.

4. Factors influencing the well-being of individuals with ADHD in children and adolescents

At present, after experiencing COVID-19 worldwide, the psychological disorders of children and adolescents are gradually increasing, and the well-being index is gradually decreasing [7]. It can be seen that mental health diseases have a significant impact on well-being. And there is such a group of children who have been plagued by diseases - attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (hereinafter referred to as ADHD).

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder, and although the cause of the disease is not very clear, there are generally both family genetic factors and environmental factors. The prevalence of ADHD is generally reported to be 3–5%, and the male-to-female ratio is (4–9):1 [8]. The disease has a huge impact on the well-being of individual children and adolescents, judging from several sources of well-being analyzed above:

1. **Peer relationship:** ADHD's individual peer relationship is generally poor, some hyperactive/impulsive individuals often have tantrums due to small things or even hit people when interacting with their peers, such ADHD-based individuals often feel that they have been bullied in school, and the occurrence of adverse events is always blamed on the outside—such as “it's all his fault” or “I didn't mean it, they pushed me first,” and similar incidents emerge endlessly. Over time, the surrounding classmates will become more and more reluctant to associate with him, more and more isolated from him, and this will bring more negative cognition to the individual, and his impulsive behavior will only increase [9]. Negative emotions are occasionally suppressed by teachers or parents, but if they slowly accumulate, it will inevitably be a “disaster,” and in China, the control of knives and firearms will make the results less bad, but such individuals appear in the United States and other Western countries, and it is difficult to imagine whether there will be such tragedies as school shootings. In addition, from the perspective of ADHD individuals themselves, the above situation usually occurs for a long time before the diagnosis is confirmed, and after the diagnosis comes another problem—stigmatizing the disease. In general, children and adolescents feel ashamed of mental illness, and this stigma is more obvious in children with ADHD because of the poor peer relationship mentioned above. Because people around him will use him as negative teaching material—“Look, that person is sick, let's stay away from him”—thus aggravating the above situation.
2. **Teacher-student relationship:** The teacher-student relationship of individuals with ADHD is also often problematic, with individuals with predominance of attention deficit often experiencing wandering in class, while impulsive behavior of individuals with hyperactivity/impulsivity can cause greater distress to teachers [10]. Such children are often considered by teachers to be deliberately causing trouble before they are diagnosed, so there will inevitably be more conflicts between teachers and students. Some substitute teachers often feel that children's lack of concentration in their own classes is disrespectful to themselves, so they will always answer questions by name to “recall” the child's attention, but this way will make the child feel that the teacher is targeting himself, thus aggravating his rebellious psychology, but making the child more reluctant to listen to the class. Another part of the teacher often sees such individual impulsive behavior,

will have a very poor impression of the child, so it is difficult to avoid the occasional wrongful child situation, such as ADHD individual and another classmate dispute, resulting in physical conflict, the teacher often feels that it is the problem of the child of the ADHD individual. When such situations increase day by day, the contradictions between teachers and students usually become irreconcilable, and it is not surprising that there is a poor teacher-student relationship, and even more physical conflicts.

3. Learning ability: ADHD individuals in this regard are undoubtedly more seriously impaired; learning is a process of receiving information, digesting information, and accumulating information, once the attention is not concentrated, its first step will appear to ask, such as difficulty concentrating in class, after school home to complete the homework attention cannot be concentrated, will represent its learning ability decline, parents often say that the child learning is particularly difficult. However, learning difficulties often occur gradually, and in general, ADHD individuals have basically no difficulty in learning in grades 1–2, and their grades can be maintained at the upper middle level, or even among the best because the IQ at this time can generally be compensated. After the 3rd grade, the homework gradually increases, the compensatory ability of IQ is insufficient, and the grades gradually decline. Of course, the decline of this grade can also be reversed, and there is a significant relationship between the attention of parents and teachers, teachers or parents strengthen counseling and supervision of learning, and the grades will rise; Conversely, if the teacher pays less attention and the parents are too busy to take care of the time, the grades will decline. And in the learning of ADHD individuals, the more simple the problem, the more prone to error, because ADHD children cannot concentrate, behavior is reckless, without understanding the meaning of the question in a hurry to answer the question, often in mathematical subjects: the front of each volume of the simple calculation, oral arithmetic, judgment, choice, fill in the blanks, etc. almost all lose points, the application of the problem, the solution of the equation can be done correctly. This creates doubts about the attitude of parents and parents—always feeling that the child is not unwilling, but unwilling, which in turn affects their family relationship. Of course, the study of theoretical knowledge of books does not represent all, such children often have the above problems when learning other types of knowledge and skills, such as children who practice the piano will make mistakes in their scores because of lack of concentration, and often miss the teacher's teachings.
4. Family relationship: The family of an individual with ADHD has a misunderstanding of the child before its diagnosis, the family will generally feel that the child has deliberately made trouble, or deliberately does not go to school well, and the child will feel that the parents do not understand themselves, so the conflict gradually intensifies. Even if the later diagnosis is clear, the rift in the relationship is already difficult to repair [11]. From the perspective of parents, parents will feel that such children are difficult to manage, and children's behavior often leads to parents being impatient, and gradually lack patience using rough authoritarian and rejecting parenting methods. This parent-child relationship further exacerbates the development of children's bad behavior forming a vicious circle. Similarly, from the perspective of siblings, they will feel that such brothers (or sisters) make them feel "ashamed," and even unwilling to mention it in front of

classmates and friends, which is also relatively distant for ADHD individuals, and such a relationship will also cause the development of their bad behavior. Therefore, family discord is often triggered by the behavior of individuals ADHD individuals and enters a vicious circle.

The four aspects described above will also have various connections and influences on each other, and these four aspects will be used as four factors to form a new model—the functional progressive disintegration model. In the functional progressive disintegration model, the four nodes of peer relationship, teacher-student relationship, learning ability, and family relationship constitute a closed loop, and there will be interaction between each node. That is, peer relationships can affect both teacher-student relationships, learning abilities, and family relationships, as can the other three. The effect of these four nodes on the well-being of individuals exists at the same time.

Peer relationship is often greatly affected by family relationships, and good and harmonious family relationships often shape confident and sunny children, so that children will be more likely to interact with others and maintain good peer relationships. On the contrary, children with poor family relations will always be unconfident or even have inferiority, lack of security, etc. Such children often appear as two extremes in dealing with peer relationships, one is excessively flattering, such as listening to others to get people's "care" or "attention". The other extreme is not to suffer losses at all or take advantage of other people, to make themselves look like not to be trifled with.

For the teacher-student relationship, the learning ability factor and the peer relationship factor have a greater impact on it. Specifically, children with poor learning ability have a teacher-student relationship that is mostly worse than that of children with good learning ability, and children with good peer relationships do not need teachers to bother to manage socially in school, and they are naturally less worried than children with poor peer relationships and often contradictory children. Of course, the learning ability here is not simply measured by academic performance, in China also pays attention to the "moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic" comprehensive development. Children with strong learning abilities may not have very good results in some courses, but their efforts and serious attitude are the same as the embodiment of learning ability, and they will still be looked at by teachers, thereby strengthening the relationship between teachers and students.

Generally speaking, compared with the other two factors, the influence of the teacher-student relationship on learning ability is greater, we often hear children say "I don't like this subject, because I don't like this substitute teacher," and a good teacher-student relationship will promote children's interest in learning and achieve the purpose of enhancing learning ability. Then, on the other hand, a bad teacher-student relationship will lead to a child's dislike of the teacher linked to the curriculum itself, which will not only cause the performance of this course to decline during the teacher's teaching, but also more serious child will completely abandon the course, and even cause the performance of other subjects to plummet. Declining grades can hit an individual's self-confidence, which in turn affects their ability to learn.

Family relations are a relatively independent factor, and the impact of the other three factors on it can be said to be not much different and may be slightly larger in terms of learning ability. The decline in the child's learning ability will lead to an increase in the anxiety of the parents who are caregivers in the family, and it is

inevitable that there will be impatience when dealing with the relationship with the child, which will lead to tension in the family relationship. Of course, family relations are not only related to the child's learning ability, but also have a lot to do with the social functions of other members of the family, for example, a child who does not have a learning ability problem, if the social function of his family is very bad, the emotional ups and downs are large, then sooner or later it will still cause tension in family relations. In addition, studies have found that individuals with good family relations have not bad teacher-student relationships and peer relationships, which means that parents provide them with more emotional support, making them more willing to accept help from others, so as to obtain a more positive emotional experience and have a higher level of psychological capital [12].

When ADHD individuals encounter negative life events, negative stimuli are generated, functional progressive disintegration models begin to "start," various factors gradually appear functional damage, each functional damage will lead to other functional damage, and eventually lead to serious damage to individual social functions, such individuals usually appear as irritable personality, incompatible with family, almost no interaction with classmates, and teachers are more like enemies, their grades are naturally a mess, and the well-being index must be negative at this time.

In general, for individuals with ADHD, the root cause of their well-being must lie in their disease, and the impact of the disease on them lies mainly in interpersonal relationships, such as relationships with peers, teachers, and family. Children with ADHD experience tension and constant frustration from an early age in their studies, work, and relationship interactions, and are often criticized and blamed by teachers, parents, siblings, and peers. After a few years, if this criticism and accusation are not diagnosed with ADHD, the child will feel "all my fault," resulting in negative emotions such as obvious depression, and well-being is gone.

5. How to improve the well-being of individuals with ADHD

As mentioned earlier, the reason why the well-being of individuals with ADHD is low is closely related to the impact of the disease, so the first thing to solve is the treatment of the disease.

1. Medication: Medication is the basis for improving the core symptoms of ADHD. The use of drugs can improve academic performance, and the effect of drug therapy on ADHD is very good, and after taking the drug, attention can be concentrated, the effect of listening to lectures is improved, and academic performance will gradually improve [13]. Close cooperation between doctors, parents, and teachers is required when administering medications. To encourage treatment compliance, doctors should make parents and children aware that ADHD can affect learning, behavior, self-esteem, social skills, and family functioning, then provide parents with information on the causes of ADHD treatment, long-term prognosis, etc. Secondly, on the basis of family members having a comprehensive understanding of these problems, discuss the choice of treatment and side effects with parents, because there are many parents who are very concerned about the side effects of drugs, and most of the reasons for self-withdrawal are worry about side effects [14]. Finally, let parents understand that the education system plays an important role in the treatment and monitoring of children with

- ADHD, and obtain the cooperation of teachers. Establish a treatment alliance through doctors, parents, and teachers to develop an effective treatment plan.
2. Behavioral therapy: (1) Behavioral reinforcement. It is the result of giving a stimulus immediately after a particular behavior, which makes the behavior more likely to occur in the future or increases the incidence of that behavior; (2) Coupling contract. (a) In the form of a written agreement, in consultation with and with the consent of the child, it is clearly defined the behavior that the child should have and the conjugal result that will be obtained if the behavior occurs or not; (3) Token Law. Use tokens with a certain “value” to reinforce the desired target behavior. Tokens can be paper coupons, chips, little red stars, etc.; (4) Fade. refers to a behavioral treatment that no longer gives any reinforcement after the occurrence of a behavior, thereby reducing the incidence of the behavior or making it not occur; (5) Enhanced pause. Children are left unending for a period of time to inhibit their particular behavior [15].
 3. Parent training: It is through scientific and systematic guidance for parents of children with ADHD, so that parents can better manage and guide their children. The most important thing is to guide the parents of the child to adopt a specific strategy to intervene in the child’s bad behavior one by one to achieve the purpose of alleviating or eliminating the bad behavior. The method of parent training is mainly to guide parents to effectively manage these behaviors in children, and to enhance compliance and self-control. When children’s compliance improves, there is also hope for improvement in behaviors that are not targeted. Some of the skills of parent training in managing children’s behavior are not only suitable for children with behavioral problems but also helpful for the education and management of normal children. This method has a good role in promoting the construction of a harmonious family environment.
 4. School-based training: Educational interventions for ADHD students are key to improving academic achievement and classroom performance. Classroom learning educational interventions include highly structured instructional design and teacher guidance, environment-based environment creation, and self-management. Instructional design aims to provide ADHD students with a highly structured classroom structure, so that teaching is in line with students’ cognitive structure and thinking characteristics; Teacher guidance mainly provides additional resources for learning and behavior problems in the classroom in the introduction, management, and closure of the curriculum; environment creation adapts the classroom environment to the special needs of ADHD students, reducing distractions and increasing adaptability; self-management is the key to improving students’ ability to control the classroom. Structured instructional design, multifaceted teacher mentoring, diverse environment creation, and self-management enable ADHD students to adapt and actively participate in classroom learning to improve academic performance [16].
 5. Cognitive level of ADHD individuals: To solve the child’s stigma of the disease, the following points must be done: 1) Family support. Good family support will give children endless confidence. 2) Do not avoid the disease, or even take the initiative to seek knowledge. When children really understand the disease, they may form the idea that the disease is like a cold, and if I insist on taking

medicine, I can be cured. 3) School understanding. Because the group of children and adolescents is more or less classmates, the care of teachers and the understanding of classmates are also very important.

6. Conclusions

Around the world, the mental health of children and adolescents is receiving more and more attention, and child psychology and psychiatry experts are actively exploring various remedies for mental illness and mental illness. Well-being is a positive emotion and perception that also reflects good mental health. With the rebound of the epidemic, the well-being index of children and adolescents has been declining, and this time we have explored the well-being of such a special group of people—ADHD individuals. The well-being of individuals with ADHD is generally lower than that of normal children and adolescents, and the root cause of this phenomenon is inseparable from the disease itself, but the direct cause is inseparable from the environment around them.

Peer relationships, teacher-student relationships, learning abilities, and family relationships are considered to be direct factors affecting their well-being, and ADHD has a great influence on these four factors, and these four factors are also considered to have various connections and influences, thus forming a functional progressive disintegration model. In this model, the four factors are both functional embodiment and influencing factors, with the generation of negative stimuli, the negative cycle begins, the functions disintegrate, and the individual's social functions gradually decline, eventually leading to serious consequences.

For such individuals, it is necessary to identify as early as possible, intervene as early as possible, and treat as soon as possible. Treatment includes medication and behavioral therapy, and parents should also be trained to know how to get along with their children, enhance their children's well-being, and improve their social functioning. Schools should also upgrade the relevant curriculum to provide personalized classrooms for these children, so as to improve the functions of children with ADHD and enhance their well-being from several aspects. From the perspective of the affected individual, it is necessary to strive to break the stigma of the disease, not to think too terrible, but also to maintain a considerable degree of attention. Just like we treat the enemy, we despise the enemy strategically and value the enemy tactically.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author details

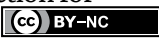
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Chapter 4

Well-Being and Happiness Feelings in Sports-Active and Sports-Inactive Adolescents

Janka Peráčková and Pavol Peráček

Abstract

The benefits of sports activities and all kinds of physical activities for well-being and feelings of happiness are important to investigate at various times of life. We studied adolescents to broaden the knowledge of well-being and feelings of happiness in the sample of sports-active and sports-inactive boys and girls. The EPOCH questionnaire was used for the research. We found statistically significant differences in the comparison of the individual qualities of social and emotional well-being: Engagement, perseverance, optimism and connectedness versus quality Happiness between sports-active and sports-inactive girls, sports-active and sports-inactive boys, between the level of sporting activity, where the level of sports does not matter because any sport brings significantly greater feelings of happiness for people who do sports in any way compared to people who do not do sports and do not engage in these activities. It is interesting to note that those who play sports six times a week experienced the greatest degree of happiness, and in the other qualities of well-being with the qualities of engagement, perseverance, optimism and connectedness, they reached statistically significantly better feelings than individuals without sports activities in their lives.

Keywords: engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, happiness, adolescents, boys, girls, sporting activities

1. Introduction

Being happy is the desire of the vast majority of people. Happiness is a composite of life satisfaction.

Happiness is a strong emotion that can be seen as a judgement of satisfaction with one's life or as an overweight of positive over negative feelings in one's emotional state [1]. The author stated that happiness centrally includes a positive evaluation of one's life or important aspects of it at the same time, and an implicit judgement that one's life is going well. This is the evaluation of a positive level of life, which we can describe as well-being. But the author's view [1] on this issue is that happiness includes a judgement of one's welfare, but it is not a judgement of one's happiness, so the explanation for this is that happiness and welfare are distinct but closely related.

In my opinion, happiness can be the outcome of well-being for someone, and well-being can result in feelings of happiness for someone.

1.1 Adolescence

A critical period in human life is the period of being an adolescent. It is the phase of life that bridges childhood to adulthood, and experts mention the range of age from 10 to 19 years. The great majority of adolescents are included in the age-based definition of a child as stated in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child [2], where the child is indicated as a person under the age of 18 years.

Why the critical period? Adolescence is characteristic of changes in psychological, social, moral, sexual and physical growth and maturation. In most cases, it is an unexpected birth of a new individual personality with personal integrity with strong feelings of belonging to peers and mates from their own age category. Authors [3] present that in adolescent, neurodevelopment occurs in brain regions associated with motivation, impulsivity and addiction. The adolescent years are characteristic of changes in body composition, physical fitness and behavioural changes in participation in physical activity, especially in adolescent girls [4–11]. Comparison of some opinions on perceiving one's body in the research by [6] shows that the research results revealed that the most satisfied with their body image were sports-active adolescent boys, and the highest pride in their own bodies in terms of attractiveness felt sports-active adolescent boys as well. Negative emotions and bad feelings about their appearance were statistically significantly experienced more by sports-inactive adolescents and even much more by girls.

Worrying trends in declining physical activity have been reported for several years [12]. The period of the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the deflection from the physical activity of young people [10] with the result that the biggest differences between the mean frequency score of doing before and during the COVID-19 pandemic were in activities allied to sporting activity ($\Delta = .80$). The curfew slowed outdoor activities and has also brought sudden changes in the lives of young active people. This was a time of uncertainty and stress. A significant decline in leisure time sports and exercise activities also presents research by [13]. A scoping review of 84 studies on the physical activity of children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic from 1672 searched studies brought evidence of a decrease in physical activity [14]. Evidence in an article [15] reported significant decreases in physical activity, increases in sedentary behaviour and disrupted sleep schedules/sleep quality in children and adolescents. The decrease in physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic is a health concern [16]. The absence of a healthy lifestyle negatively influenced well-being. Students with poor lifestyles had higher anxiety, depression and stress [17]. Our personal experience is that many adolescents who were forcibly forced to stop their organised or nonorganized physical activity and sports due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have not returned to it today.

1.2 Well-being

Well-being is an area of study, investigation and research in psychology and focuses on interpreting whether a person is functioning well and feeling well.

The term well-being appears as a link on Google in the number of 9,310,000,000 as of October 5, 2022. Here is the evidence that the interest in this term is currently enormous.

Most people are interested in a comfortable life. Most people are trying to enjoy life because people live for emotions and mostly for positive emotions. Well-being is the state of feeling healthy and happy, simply said feeling well in various areas, emotionally, physically and socially. The tendency to think positively brings greater emotional well-being. Being physically fit brings greater physical well-being. Having satisfying relationships and being surrounded by close people bring social well-being. Being emotionally, physically and socially fit is the way to well-being and quality of life.

1.3 Happiness

Subjective well-being and life satisfaction are often called happiness. Happiness is related to positive emotions. For someone, happiness is not the result of having money and being rich. For someone, happiness is not the result of not having illnesses and being healthy. The feeling of being happy differs from person to person. Happiness is an emotional state that is characterised as a feeling in the present moment. Those who strive for an eternal feeling of happiness are often disappointed and ultimately sad because their expectations were not fulfilled. It should not be a goal in life of a person to feel happiness in every minute of life; happiness is not the permanent state of mind. People should rather be oriented to contentment, that is, satisfaction with life and well-being.

As Veenhoven [18] said, happiness is a state of mind and the degree to which a person evaluates the overall quality of his/her present life-as-a-whole positively.

If we assume that the experience of joy and happiness can improve life, then we can say that sporting activity improves life because sport brings joy, happiness and satisfaction with life and brings positive feelings to an individual. Emotions are also an integral part of exercising and sporting activities. Exercise reduces stress and increases the feeling of happiness [8]. The article by the author [19] presented that the literature on subjective well-being (SWB), which also included the area of happiness and various other components of subjective well-being, is among experts in large scale discussed and the components of SWB are harder to measure.

For one's certain pleasant state of mind can be tended to say that one is happy. Friendship connections and social support are important to people's happiness. In the article [20], the presence of happiness is described as a positive effect, with social connection, trust and wellness. Studies of thousands of people in the research work of [21] show the key to being happy. The best advice is to learn the hidden power of complete inner engagement, for which the author uses the term flow. Undertake things and tasks for your own sake and challenge yourself with tasks that require a high degree of skills and commitment.

1.4 Benefits of physical activity and sports for well-being and happiness

Physical activity is defined [22] as a multifaceted movement of an individual that a person performs with their organs of movement. It is a physical activity stimulated by muscular work. With its effects, it contributes to the proper development of a person, plays a very important role in the field of ontogenesis and affects the overall growth and development of skeletal tissue. In addition to physical health, it also has beneficial effects on the mental health of a person.

The terminology of sport [23] characterises this term 'sport' as an organised, specific and competitive activity aimed at achieving maximum sports performance,

thus significantly focusing on the difference between the terms sport and physical activity.

Physical activity also has a positive influence on the psychomotor development and psychological well-being of a person. The positive influence of sports helps improve the quality of life of an active participant. Two subjective dimensions of quality of life gave evidence [8] that sporting activity positively influenced the perception of the dimension of quality of life enjoyment and satisfaction and the dimension of global satisfaction with life among adolescents. Sports-active boys are statistically significantly more satisfied with the domain of quality of life enjoyment and satisfaction in comparison with sports-inactive boys ($p = 0.027$). In global satisfaction with life, the statistical difference between sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys ($p < 0.001$) and sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls ($p = 0.026$) was found.

Boys spent more time participating in sports activities than girls [24], and boys reported a higher perception of self-competence and global self-worth than girls. Both boys and girls who actively participated in sports activities were more likely to perceive a higher level of self-worth than sports-inactive boys and girls.

Adolescents studying high school have an increase in sedentary life due to the time devoted to the necessity of spending time in school and spending time learning the high school curriculum. Interventions that promote healthy lifestyles for all are people encouragement in physical activities and sports.

Adolescents, boys and girls who participated in after-school sports showed higher levels of quality of life perception in the research [25].

A systematic review [26] with 87 articles included in meta-analyses from the years 2006 to 2018 demonstrated strong evidence that physical activity improves the quality of life.

The results of studies conducted by Penedo and Dahn [27] have shown that physical activity interventions have beneficial effects on health-related quality of life.

2. Methods

2.1 Study design and data collection

2.1.1 Participants

The sample consists of 216 students from secondary schools in Slovakia, mainly from schools located in the capital city of Bratislava (**Table 1**). The selection was intentional based on the accessibility. The determination of sports activity and sports inactivity was based on the level of participation in extracurricular sporting activities. We investigated the mode of sporting activity. Sports-active adolescents are those who are involved and participated in regularly organised sports (with club membership and perform sports activities more than twice a week for a total of at least 120 minutes). Sports-active adolescents are also those who are involved in sports regularly nonorganised, the so-called recreationally (without club membership, but more than twice a week for a total of at least 120 minutes). Sports-inactive adolescents are those who play sports only occasionally recreationally (irregularly) and those who do not engage in sporting activities.

The decimal age of sports-active boys was 17.37 (SD = 1.20), and in sports-inactive boys, the decimal age was 17.33 (SD = 1.13). The mean decimal age of sports-active

Gender	Sports-active		Sports-inactive		Total (Σ)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male (Boys)	50	23.1	51	23.7	101	46.8
Female (Girls)	61	28.2	54	25	115	53.2
Total (Σ)	111	51.3	105	48.7	216	100

The abbreviations in the whole text: n = number of participants or frequencies; % = percentage; cm = centimetres, kg = kilogrammes, SD = standard deviation.

Table 1.
 Representation of sports-active and sports-inactive male and female adolescents in the sample.

girls was 17.61 (SD = .89), and in sports-inactive girls, the decimal age was 18.05 (SD = .92).

The amount 50 of sports-active boys is composed of boys who are involved in regularly organised sports and represent quantity 19, regularly nonorganized sports with quantity 15, regularly organised and regularly nonorganized sports with quantity 9, regularly organised and recreational occasional sports with quantity 2, and regularly nonorganized and recreational occasional sports with quantity 5 (**Table 2**).

The amount 51 of sports-inactive boys is composed of boys who are involved in sporting activities only occasionally recreationally (irregularly, less than twice a week and less than 120 minutes a week) with the quantity 27 and those who do not engage in sporting activities with the quantity 24 (**Table 2**).

The amount 61 of sports-active girls is composed of girls who are involved and participated in regularly organised sports and represent the quantity 4, regularly

Mode and variety of the sporting activity, according to gender	Frequency	Per cent (%)
Sports regularly organised—boys	19	8.8
Sports regularly organised—girls	4	1.9
Sports regularly nonorganised—boys	15	6.9
Sports regularly nonorganised—girls	32	14.8
Sports recreationally occasionally—boys	27	12.5
Sports recreationally occasionally—girls	32	14.8
Sports-inactive—boys	24	11.1
Sports-inactive—girls	22	10.2
Sports regularly organised and regularly nonorganised—boys	9	4.2
Sports regularly organised and regularly nonorganised—girls	1	0.5
Sports regularly organised and recreationally occasionally—boys	2	0.9
Sports regularly nonorganised and recreationally occasionally—boys	5	2.3
Sports regularly nonorganised and recreationally occasionally—girls	24	11.1
Total	216	100

Table 2.
 Mode and variety of the sporting activity, according to gender.

Gender and sporting activities	Body Height		Body Weight	
	cm	SD	kg	SD
Sports-active boys	181.06	7.49	72.22	10.62
Sport-inactive boys	175.72	8.70	67.75	13.15
Total boys	178.37	8.52	69.96	12.12
Sport-active girls	169.98	6.65	59.51	6.58
Sport-inactive girls	168.91	7.52	61.50	12.66
Total girls	169.48	7.06	60.44	9.91

Table 3.
Body height and body weight of members from the sample.

nonorganised sports with the quantity 32, regularly organised and regularly nonorganised sports with the quantity 1, and regularly nonorganised and recreational occasional sports with the quantity 24 (Table 2).

The amount 54 of sports-inactive girls is composed of girls who are involved and participated in sporting activities only occasionally recreationally (irregularly, less than twice a week and less than 120 minutes a week) with the quantity 32, and those who do not engage in sporting activities with the quantity 22 (Table 2).

Basic anthropometric data, such as body height and body weight, are presented in Table 3.

In a comparison of the range of performing a weekly sporting activity between sports-active and sports-inactive boys it is evident that a greater number of minutes were devoted to sports among sports-active boys 402.40 minutes per week (SD = 142.14) than among sports-inactive boys (recreational occasional sports) 41.77 minutes per week (SD = 42.03).

The ratio of this range of performing a weekly sporting activity between sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls (occasional recreational sports) is 215.90 minutes per week (SD = 70.66) to 57.78 minutes per week (SD = 66.18). The frequency of sporting activity per week is shown in Table 4. Mostly 21.3% of persons from the sample

Sporting activity frequency	n	%
No sporting activity	46	21.3
once	28	13.0
Twice a week	31	14.4
Three times a week	46	21.3
Four times a week	24	11.1
Five times a week	18	8.3
Six times a week	16	7.4
Seven times a week	7	3.2
Total	216	100.0

Table 4.
Weekly frequency of performing the sporting activity in the entire sample.

Gender and sporting activities Frequency	Weekly frequency of performing the sporting activity								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total (Σ)
Sports-active boys %	0	0	1	15	11	7	14	2	50
			2.0	30.0	22.0	14.0	28.0	4.0	100
Sport-inactive boys %	24	13	11	3	0	0	0	0	51
	47.1	25.5	21.6	5.9					100
Sport-active girls %	0	0	5	25	13	11	2	5	61
			8.2	41.0	21.3	18.0	3.3	8.2	100
Sport-inactive girls %	22	15	14	3	0	0	0	0	54
	40.7	27.8	25.9	5.6					100

Table 5.
 Weekly frequency of performing the sporting activity in sports-active and sports-inactive boys and girls.

did not do any sporting activity or the same percentage performed sporting activities three times a week. The smallest number of people who performed weekly sporting activity with the highest frequency seven times a week was 7 representing 3.2%.

Dividing the sample into sports-active boys, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls, the presented numbers and percentages are created that are presented in **Table 5**.

In total, 173 (80.1%) members of the entire sample (n = 216) felt mostly healthy and 43 (19.9%) felt not mostly healthy (3 sports-active boys—1.4%; 11 sports-active girls—5.1%; 16 sports-inactive boys—7.4%; 13 sports-inactive girls—6.0%).

2.1.2 EPOCH questionnaire

Happiness is difficult to measure and investigate due to its subjective nature. To measure social and emotional well-being, which includes the happiness domain, we used the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being Questionnaire [28], which contains 20 items from individual qualities of social and emotional well-being. Many studies attest to the validity of subjective self-report measures, where happiness also belongs [29–32].

The EPOCH measure of adolescent well-being created by [28], as a brief, reliable and positively worded multidimensional measure, is the contribution to empirical testing for the well-being of adolescents.

The EPOCH well-being measure orientates to five domains of positive characteristics in adolescents that could foster well-being, physical health and other positive outcomes in adulthood.

The findings support the EPOCH measure as an adequate scale and inform about sensitive approaches to comparing mean scores across cultures [33]. The reliability and validity of the measure for the Slovakian adolescents were realised [34]. The findings of several studies [35–37] provide a recommendation based on empirical support for using the EPOCH questionnaire to investigate adolescent well-being.

The EPOCH Measure for Adolescent Well-being is a brief multidimensional measure that contributes to the empirical testing of well-being to assess adolescent positive psychological functioning. EPOCH consists of five subcomponents, five domains, five different positive characteristics that together support the assessment of a higher level of well-being [28]:

1. E Engagement (interest/involvement)—Assesses the general tendency to engage in various activities in life, to be emotionally involved in those activities, to have interest in doing those activities and the ability to be engrossed in the activity.
2. P Perseverance (completion/perseverance)—Evaluates a person’s ability to follow and fulfil their goals even in the face of certain obstacles. It is the ability to take pleasure in getting things done, enjoy doing things and finish them. It is the manifestation of conscientiousness as a personality trait.
3. Optimism—Evaluates a person’s hope and positive outlook and expectations for the future, the tendency to see things and situations from a favourable point of view, even when some negative situations occur, they are accepted and perceived as something temporary. Maintaining optimism is the key factor in perseverance.
4. C Connectedness (involvement in social relationships)—Assesses the feeling of support from others, the feeling of being loved, accepted by others, provided with friendship, be appreciated and the presentation of having satisfying relationships with others.
5. H Happiness—Evaluates a person’s relatively stable and positive mood, happiness and loving life; it does not focus on a momentary positive emotion, but it especially assesses whether the person is generally cheerful and satisfied as a steady state of his/her own feelings. Optimism and perseverance as psychological constructs are at the top of the explanation of happiness feelings.

Each quality consisted of four items that the respondent rated on a FIVE-point Likert scale (Tables 6 and 7).

E: Engagement (interest/involvement)	(E = mean of = E1 to E4)
P: Perseverance (completion/perseverance)	(P = mean of = P1 to P4)
O: Optimism	(O = mean of = O1 to O4)
C: Connectedness (involvement in social relationships)	(C = mean of = C1 to C4)
H: Happiness	(H = mean of = H1 to H4)

Table 6. *Distribution of items or determining individual qualities of social and emotional well-being in the EPOCH questionnaire.*

Statements: Items 1–11.	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Almost always
Scoring	1	2	3	4	5
Other statements: Items 12–20.	Not at all like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	Mostly like me	Very much like me
Scoring	1	2	3	4	5

Table 7. *Evaluating scale in the EPOCH questionnaire.*

2.1.3 Methods of processing and evaluating the data obtained

We used basic mathematical-statistical methods and the IBM SPSS Statistic Data Editor statistical program, Version 27, to process the data obtained. We used the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine the normality of the data distribution. We found that the normality of the data distribution did not apply to most of the comparison groups. We used the Mann-Whitney U-test to compare two independent groups for which the normality of data does not apply. Wilcoxon test was used to compare two paired samples and check whether the mean values of two dependent groups differ significantly from each other. We also used the Microsoft Excel program to process the results into graphs.

3. Results

The results verify whether in this research design of measures of well-being and happiness in adolescent boys and girls, sports-active and sports inactive boys and girls we can find some 'gender gap' or 'sports-active versus sports-inactive gap'. In this results section, we compared the research samples between boys and girls, sports-active and sports-inactive boys, sports-active and sports-inactive girls for each factor from EPOCH Measures for adolescent well-being and for overall well-being, too. In each factor, we compared each item (statement) of the factor between the mentioned research samples. It is necessary to write that the score given for each item of the questionnaire depends on the final decision of the individual and is given according to the momentary emotional condition of the individuals.

3.1 The factor: Engagement

Engagement involves intense concentration, emotional involvement, psychological absorption, focus and commitment [21]. Engagement influences happiness [38]. Engagement is about dedication, devotion, enthusiasm and passion. Being engaged describes being proactively involved in some activities, being there not just with the head, but also with the heart.

3.1.1 Comparison of engagement in boys and girls

Between the statements on factor engagement, we did not find statistically significant differences in the comparison boys versus girls (**Figure 1**).

In each statement from the factor, engagement had adolescent boys higher scores of evaluations than adolescent girls. It seems that boys when they are involved in some activity, which they like, are a little bit more engaged in than girls and are more absorbed in what they are doing with the difference in comparison between boys and girls $\Delta = .18$ (in favour of boys). The highest score from the factor engagement for both boys and girls is assigned to the item E1 'When I do an activity, I enjoy it so much that I lose track of time' with the difference in the score comparison between boys and girls $\Delta = .12$ (in favour boys).

3.1.2 Comparison of engagement in sports-active and sports-inactive boys

In comparison, between the score of items from the factor engagement and the overall factor engagement, we found the statistical difference at the 5% level of

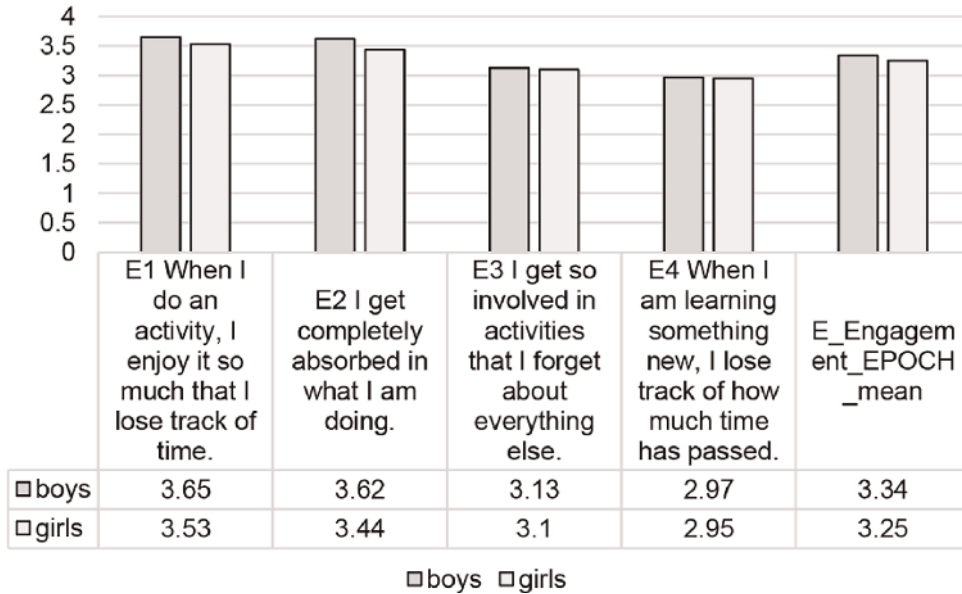


Figure 1. Engagement: Partial statements and overall factor in boys and girls.

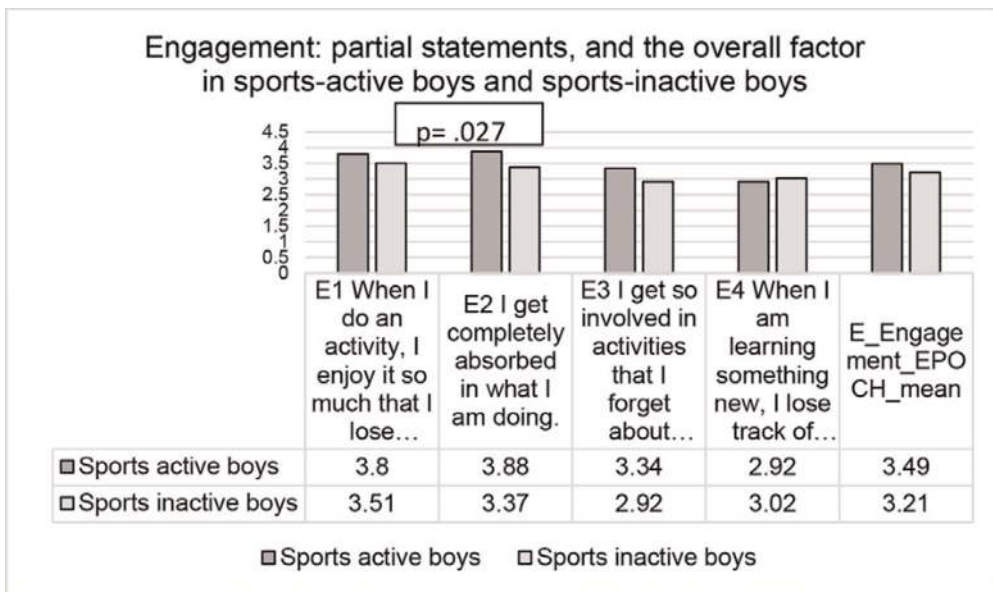


Figure 2. Engagement: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys.

significance only in item E2 ‘I get completely absorbed in what I am doing’ (U = 964, p = .027) between scores of sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys with the higher evaluation of own engagement in sport-active boys (**Figure 2**).

A comparison of the assigned scores for the individual items of the engagement factor in sports-active boys shows that there are also statistically significant differences in the assigned scores in up to five comparisons. The result of the statistical comparison of the third item E3 with the first item E1 shows the significance $Z = -3.012, p = .003$. The fourth item E4 with the first item E1 shows the significance

$Z = -3.770$, $p < .001$. The third item E3 with the second item E2 shows the significance $Z = -3.363$, $p = .001$. The fourth item E4 with the second item E2 shows the significance $Z = -5.112$, $p < .001$. The fourth item E4 with the third item E3 shows the significance $Z = -3.019$, $p = .003$. The highest difference between the individual items is the difference between the second item E2 and the fourth item E4 ($E2 - E4 = \Delta = .96$) where higher score is in the second item.

In a comparison of the scores for the items of engagement in sports-inactive boys, the statistical significance was found in four comparisons: E3 to E1 ($Z = -3.832$, $p < .001$); E4 to E1 ($Z = -2.819$, $p = .005$); E3 to E2 ($Z = -3.292$, $p = .002$); E4 to E2 ($Z = -3.138$; $p = .002$).

There is no statistical significance in the overall factor engagement—the mean of $(E1 + E2 + E3 + E4)/4$ —between sports-active and sports-inactive boys.

3.1.3 Comparison of engagement in sports-active and sports-inactive girls

Between sports-active and sports-inactive girls, we found one more statistically significant difference than between sports-active and sports-inactive boys (the ratio is 1:2) in comparison of engagement items. The overall factor engagement reached a statistical difference at the 5% level of significance (**Figure 3**).

Statistically significant differences in the assigned scores are in comparison to the items: E2 'I get completely absorbed in what I am doing' ($U = 1151.500$, $p = .004$); E3 'I get so involved in activities that I forget about everything else' ($U = 1264$, $p = .027$). The overall factor 'Engagement' shows significance ($U = 1265.5$, $p = .032$) compared to sports-active and sports-inactive girls. Sports-active girls are significantly more engaged when they do activities.

The level of evaluation of individual items from the factor of engagement among sports-active girls shows such a difference that it reaches to have three statistical significances of the differences in evaluation: E4 to E1 ($Z = -2.518$, $p = .012$); E3 to E2 ($Z = -3.124$, $p = .002$); E4 to E2 ($Z = -4.133$, $p < .001$).

In the comparison, the assigned score for individual items from factor engagement among sports-inactive girls is found to have four statistically significant differences in

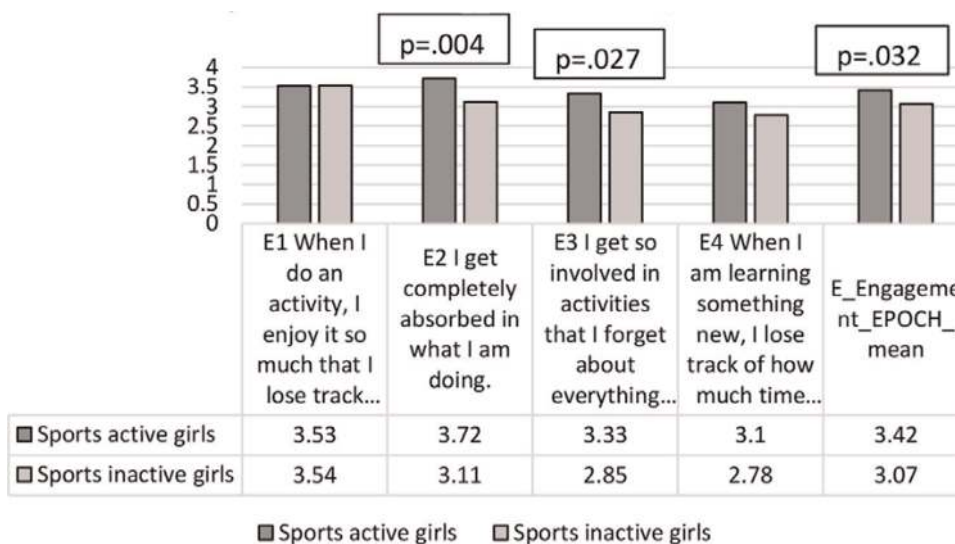


Figure 3. Engagement: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

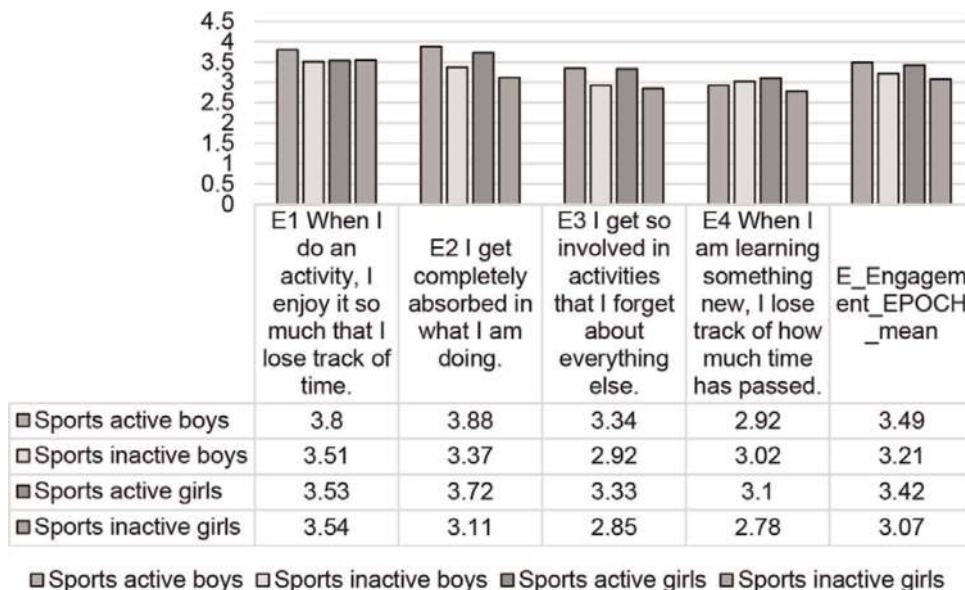


Figure 4. Engagement: Partial statements, and overall factor in sports-active boys, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

evaluation: E2 to E1 ($Z = -3.184, p = .001$); E3 to E1 ($Z = -4.155, p < .001$); E4 to E1 ($Z = -3.781, p < .001$); E3 to E2 ($Z = -2.263, p = .024$).

3.1.4 Comparison of engagement, partial statements and overall factor in sports-active, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

The statement E2 ‘I get completely absorbed in what I am doing’ reached sports-active boys the highest score among all statements (3.88), and the lowest score was found in the statement E4 ‘When I am learning something new, I lose track of how much time has passed’, for sports-inactive girls (2.78) (Figure 4).

The comparison within the overall factor engagement found the statistical significance between sports-active boys and sports-inactive girls ($U = 985, p = .017$), sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls ($U = 1265,5, p = .032$).

No statistical significance was found in the overall perseverance factor in the comparison of sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys, sports-active boys and sports-active girls, sports-inactive boys and sports-active girls, sports-inactive boys and sports-inactive girls.

Engagement is stronger when we engage in activities we like. Engagement is stronger when we cognitively focus on the activity that we perform right now. Engagement is stronger when we are in a state of being conscious or aware of the activity that we are involved in.

3.2 The factor: Perseverance

Perseverance is the factor that explains the ability to keep doing something difficult and endure even when one is no longer in control. It is the continuation in an effort to do something or achieve something despite difficulties and failures. Preparedness to cope with, master and overcome difficulties is part of perseverance.

3.2.1 Comparison of perseverance in boys and girls

Three statements (P1, P3 and P4) are with higher scores in boys than in girls. Only one statement P2 reached a higher score in girls (**Figure 5**). Girls can with stronger persuasion keep doing schoolwork until it is finished. No statistical significance was found between all pairs of statements for comparison between boys and girls.

The biggest differences $\Delta = .21$ (in favour of boys, but not with the statistical significance) in presenting statements between boys and girls are in statements P1 and P4, where boys predominated over girls in thought and in the persuasion that they more than girls finish whatever they begin and that they are harder workers than girls. Perseverance as the overall factor composed of four items is almost at the same level in boys and girls so both boys and girls are able to follow and fulfil their goals even when difficulties occur.

3.2.2 Comparison of perseverance in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys

When comparing sports-active and sports-inactive boys for the individual statements that create the perseverance factor, we found that there are significant differences in the strength of the evaluation of individual statements that were manifested in the statistical significance of the differences for the three statements and also for the overall perseverance factor (**Figure 6**).

Sports-active boys more strongly evaluated their attitude to the expression that they finish everything they start (P1: $U = 750$, $p < .001$), that they stick to completing the plans they started (P3: $U = 583.5$, $p < .001$) and that they are harder workers (P4: $U = 889$, $p = .007$) than sports-inactive boys. The overall perseverance factor also recorded statistical significance $U = 748$, $p < .001$ in favour of sports-active boys.

There were different evaluations for individual statements among sports-active boys that resulted in the finding of statistical significance when comparing the

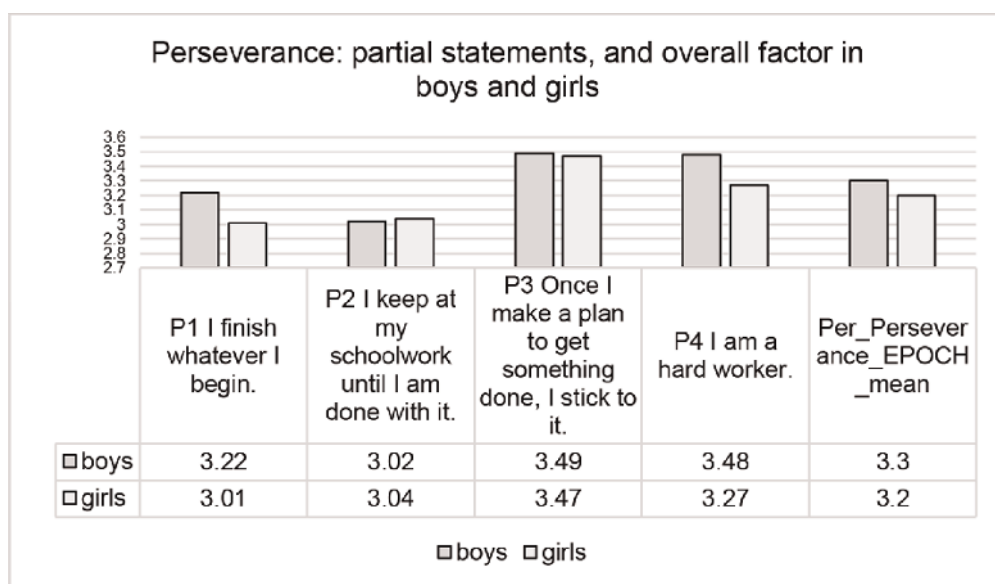


Figure 5. Perseverance: Partial statements, and overall factor in boys and girls.

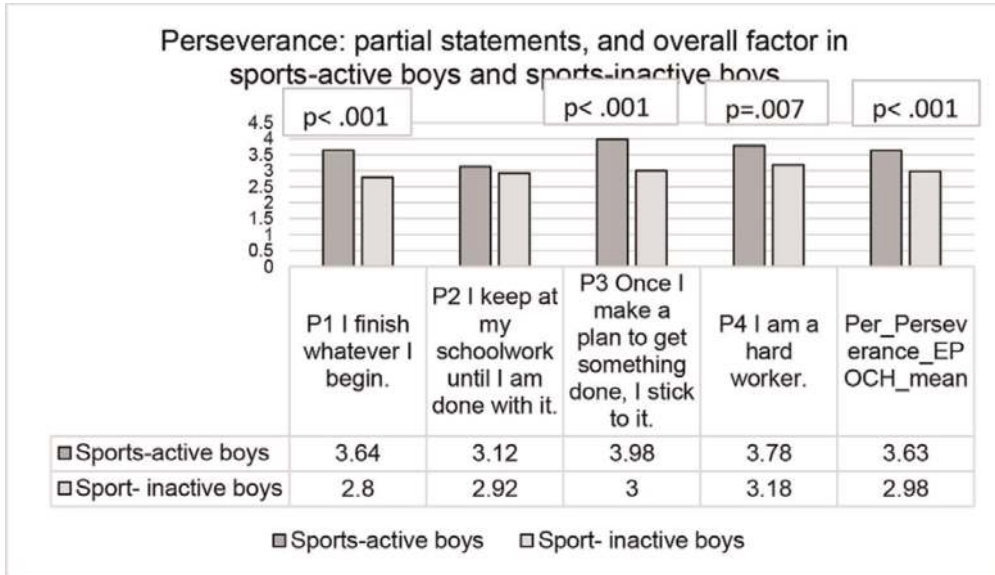


Figure 6. Perseverance: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys.

evaluations of the statements with each other: P2 with P1 ($Z = -2.747, p = .006$), P3 with P1 ($Z = -2.491, p = .013$), P3 with P2 ($Z = -4.173, p < .001$), P4 with P2 ($Z = -3.664, p < .001$), P4 with P3 ($Z = -1.961, p = .050$). We did not observe anything similar in sports-inactive boys.

3.2.3 Comparison of perseverance in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

Perseverance (**Figure 7**) contained in statements P2 'I keep at my schoolwork until I am done with it' and P4 'I am a hard worker' reached statistical significance in the

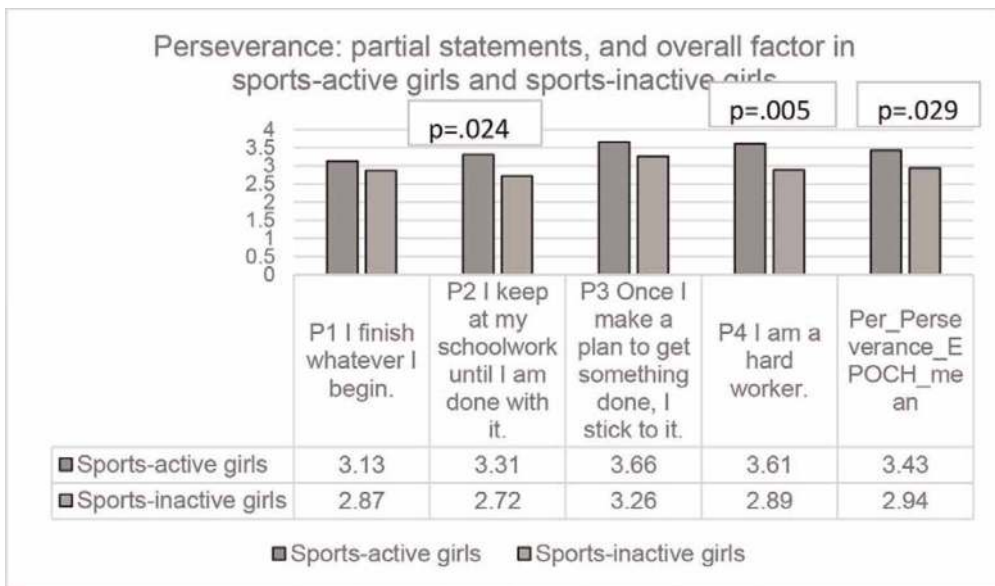


Figure 7. Perseverance: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

differences between sports-active and sports-inactive girls (P2: $U = 125,5$, $p = .024$; P4: $U = 1161,5$, $p = .005$).

Statistical significance in the value of $U = 1258,5$, $p = .029$ is also shown for the overall perseverance factor between sports-active and sports-inactive girls.

We present a comparison of the strength of expression for individual statements among sports-active girls, and we found four significant differences in expressions of the strength of attitude towards individual statements: P3 with P1 ($Z = -3.995$, $p < .001$), P4 with P1 ($Z = -3.504$, $p < .001$), P3 with P2 ($Z = -2.223$, $p = .026$), P4 with P2 ($Z = -2.446$, $p = .014$).

Three comparisons of statements each to the other from the perseverance factor among sports-inactive girls reached statistical significance: P3 with P1 ($Z = -2.615$, $p = .009$), P3 with P2 ($Z = -2.399$, $p = .016$), P4 with P3 ($Z = -2.579$, $p = .010$).

3.2.4 Comparison of perseverance, partial statements and overall factor in sports-active, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

The highest value of the score from the individual statements from the perseverance factor occurs in statement P3 (3.98) in sports-active boys and the lowest value of the score is in statement P2 (2,72) in sports-inactive girls (**Figure 8**).

The overall perseverance factor did not show statistically significant differences comparing sports-inactive boys and sports-inactive girls, sports-active boys and sports-active girls.

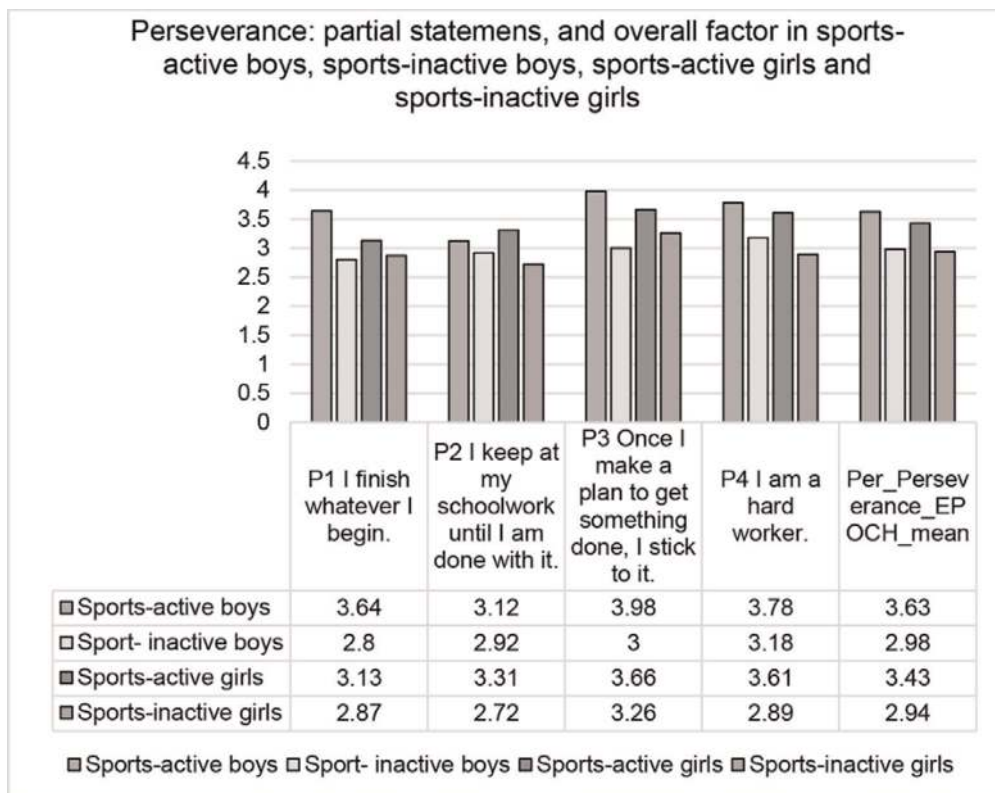


Figure 8. Perseverance: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

Statistical significance in the differences was recorded between sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys ($U = 748, p < .001$, in favour of sports-active boys), between sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls ($U = 1258,5, p = .029$ in favour of sports-active girls), between sports-inactive boys and sports-active girls ($U = 1139, p = .015$ in favour of sports-active girls) and between sports-active boys and sports-inactive girls ($U = 895.5, p = .003$ in favour of sports-active boys).

Perseverance helps a person to find who is better prepared for solving problems. A person can think he/she is prepared, but in a time of difficulties, preparedness will put him/her squarely in front of the mirror of truth, and then he/she can find if he/she is enough strong to overcome and solve these difficulties. Difficulties point out and discover the weaknesses of a person.

3.3 The factor: Optimism

Optimism can significantly influence mental and physical well-being by the promoting a healthy lifestyle, and optimistic subjects are more resilient to stress [39]. Optimism is presented in the study [40] as a protective factor with regard to well-being and physical and psychical health.

3.3.1 Comparison of optimism in boys and girls

Boys come out more optimistic (**Figure 9**) than girls about the future (O1: $U = 2583.5, p < .001$), about thinking that good things are going to happen to them (O3: $U = 4695, p = .012$), about the belief that things will work out no matter how difficult they seem (O4: $U = 4732.5, p = .014$).

The overall optimism factor in boys also shows statistical significance in comparison with girls ($U = 3852.5, p < .001$).

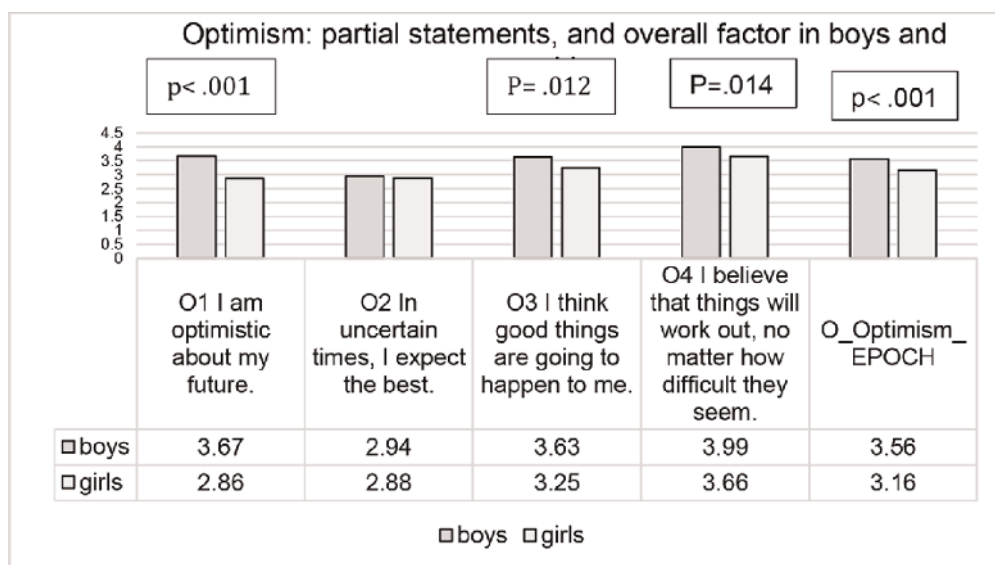


Figure 9. Optimism: Partial statements and overall factor in boys and girls.

3.3.2 Comparison of optimism in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys

Sports-active boys are more optimistic than sports-inactive boys in optimism's statements O1 ($U = 745.5, p = p < .001$) and O4 ($U = 926, p = .012$). The overall factor of optimism reached statistical significance too in favour of sports-active boys ($U = 832, p = .002$) (**Figure 10**).

3.3.3 Comparison of optimism in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

In all investigated items, sports-active girls show more optimism than sport-inactive girls (**Figure 11**). Statistical significance is in the statement, which talks about the belief that good things are going to happen to them ($U = 960, p < .001$). The overall optimism factor is of statistical significance between sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls ($U = 1297, p = .048$), and therefore, we can write that those sports-active girls from our sample are more optimistic than sports-inactive girls.

3.3.4 Comparison of optimism, partial statements and overall factor in sports-active, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

The highest value of the score reached statement O4 about the belief that things will work out, no matter how difficult they seem (4.28) in sports-active boys and the lowest score was in the statement O1 about the optimism of the future (2.69) in sports-inactive girls (**Figure 12**).

The comparison of the overall optimism factor revealed statistical significance: between sports-active and sports-inactive boys ($U = 832, p = .002$) in favour of sports-active boys; sports-active boys and sports-active girls ($U 964.5, p = .001$) in

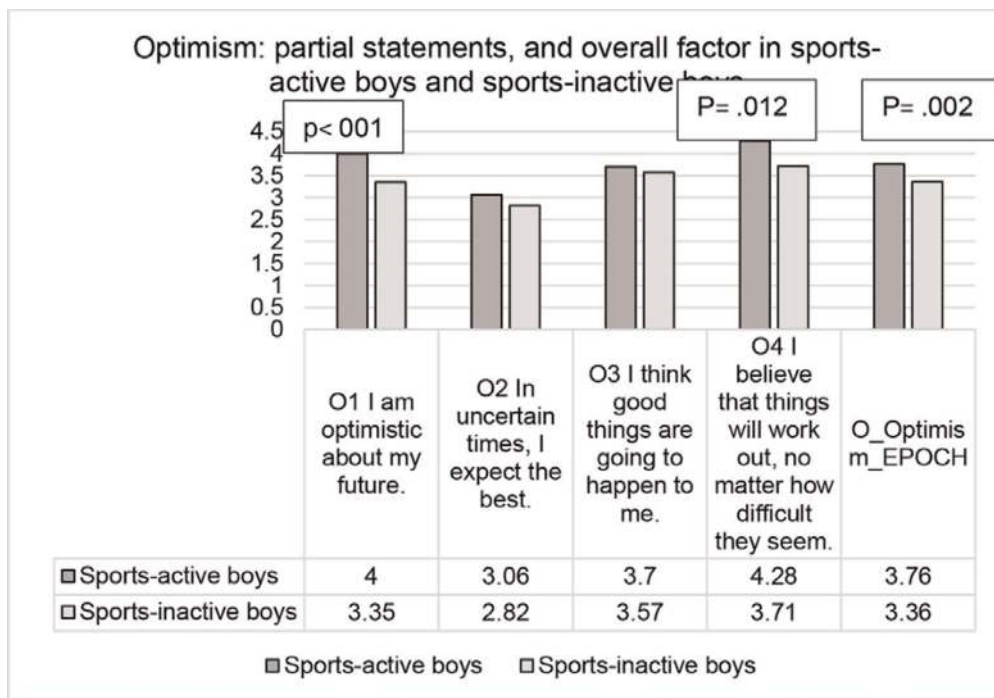


Figure 10. Optimism: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys.

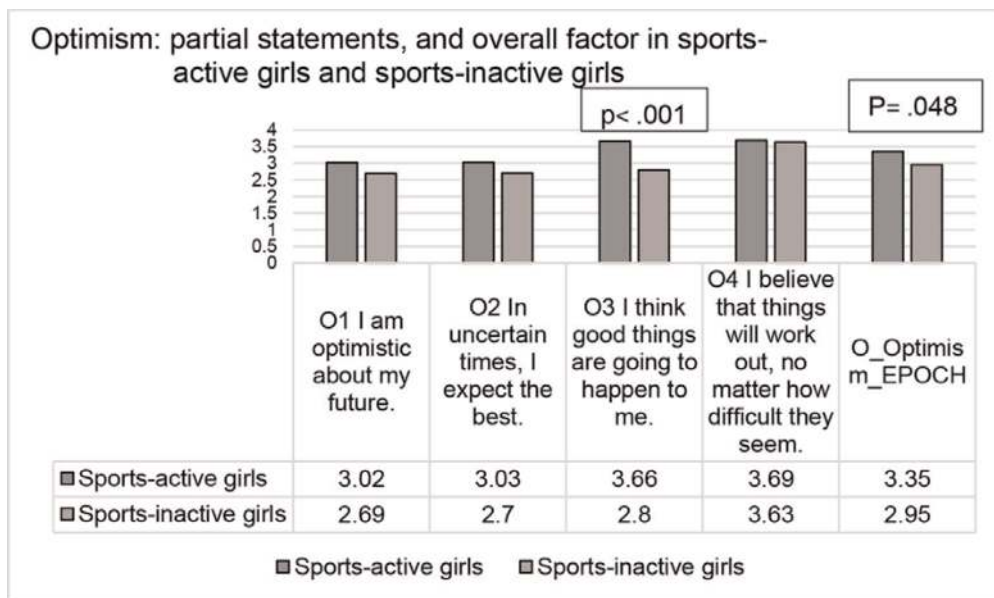


Figure 11.
Optimism: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

favour of sports-active boys; sports-active boys and sports-inactive girls ($U = 494.5, p < .001$) in favour of sports-active boys; sports-inactive boys and sports-inactive girls ($U = 941, p = .005$) in favour of sports-inactive boys; sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls ($U = 1297, p = .048$) in favour of sports-active girls. No statistical significance in differences was found between sports-inactive boys and sports-active girls.

Sports-active boys and girls and sports-inactive boys are more optimistic than sports-inactive girls.

3.4 The factor: Connectedness

Being socially related to someone is the essence of life. Social connectedness is very important in adolescents' development. Strong friendships that develop during adolescence last for years.

3.4.1 Comparison of connectedness in boys and girls

Comparing the statements and the overall connectedness factor, we found that all statements (C1, C2, C3, C4) and the overall connectedness factor have a greater value of scores in girls. Three statements show statistical significance in comparison with boys: C1 ($U = 4782, p = .020$), C3 ($U = 4780, p = .015$), C4 ($U = 4634.5, p = .010$) (Figure 13).

The girls presented more satisfying relationships with others than boys.

3.4.2 Comparison of connectedness in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys

Sports-active boys are those who expressed that they have someone with whom they can share the good news, have people who stand by and care about them. The persuasion was so strong that their opinion on this issue brought statistical significance in statements C1 ($U = 823, p = .002$), C2 ($U = 938, p = .015$), C3 ($U = 984.5,$

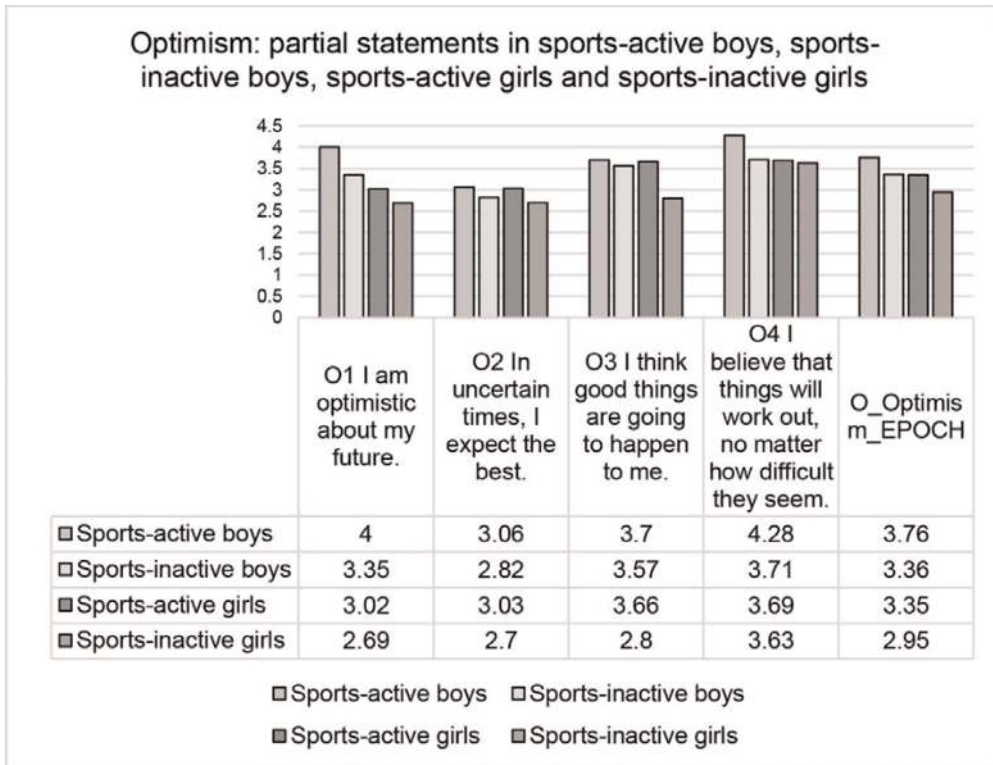


Figure 12. Optimism: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

$p = .037$) and the overall connectedness factor C ($U = 883, p = .007$) in comparison with sports-inactive boys (**Figure 14**).

3.4.3 Comparison of connectedness in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

The girls, nevertheless, whether sports-active or sports-inactive, are almost about at the same level of expression about friendships, about having someone to solve problems with or having real friends. Surprisingly, sports-inactive girls in all statements, except statement C1, reached higher values of scores. It was for three statements (C2, C3 and C4) and the overall connectedness factor. Only one statement C3 shows statistical significance ($U = 1275.5, p = .021$) (**Figure 15**).

3.4.4 Comparison of connectedness, partial statements and overall factor in sports-active, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

The highest value of the score reached statement C4 (4.59) in sports-inactive girls about the presentation of having friends that they really care about, and the lowest score was in statement C1 (3.14) in sports-inactive boys about the thought when something good happens that they have the people for sharing the news with (**Figure 16**).

Comparing each sample to other samples in the overall connectedness factor, we found several statistically significant differences: between sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys ($U = 883, p = .007$) in favour of sports-active boys; between sports-inactive boys and sports-active girls ($U = 1130.5, p = .012$) in favour of sports

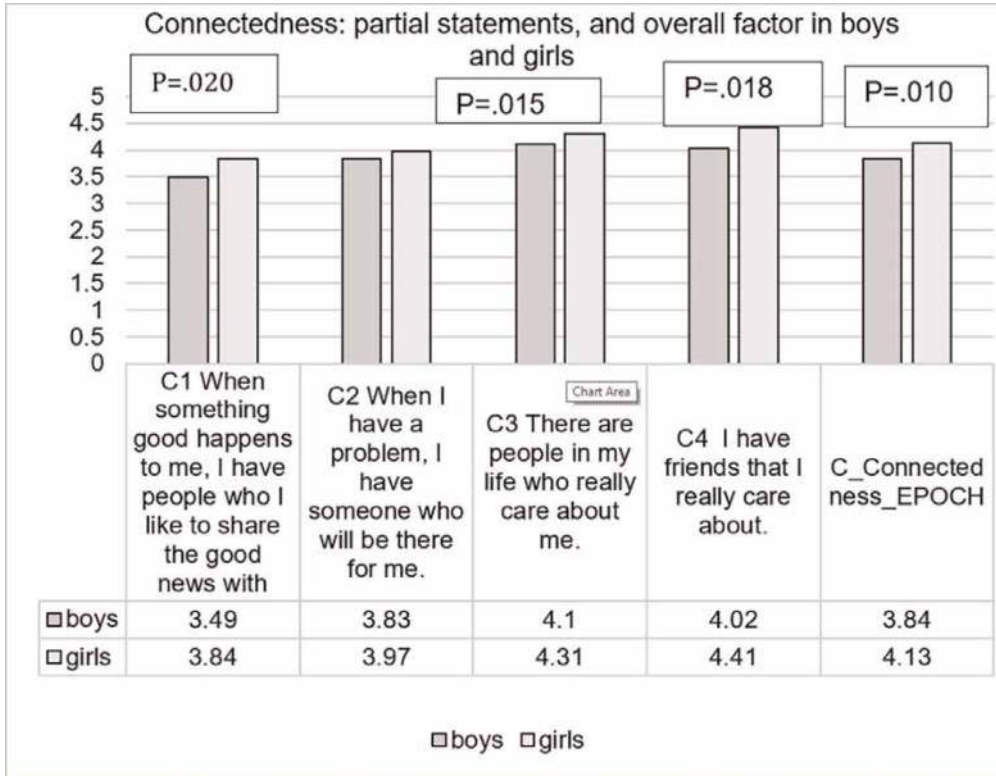


Figure 13. Connectedness: Partial statements and overall factor in boys and girls.

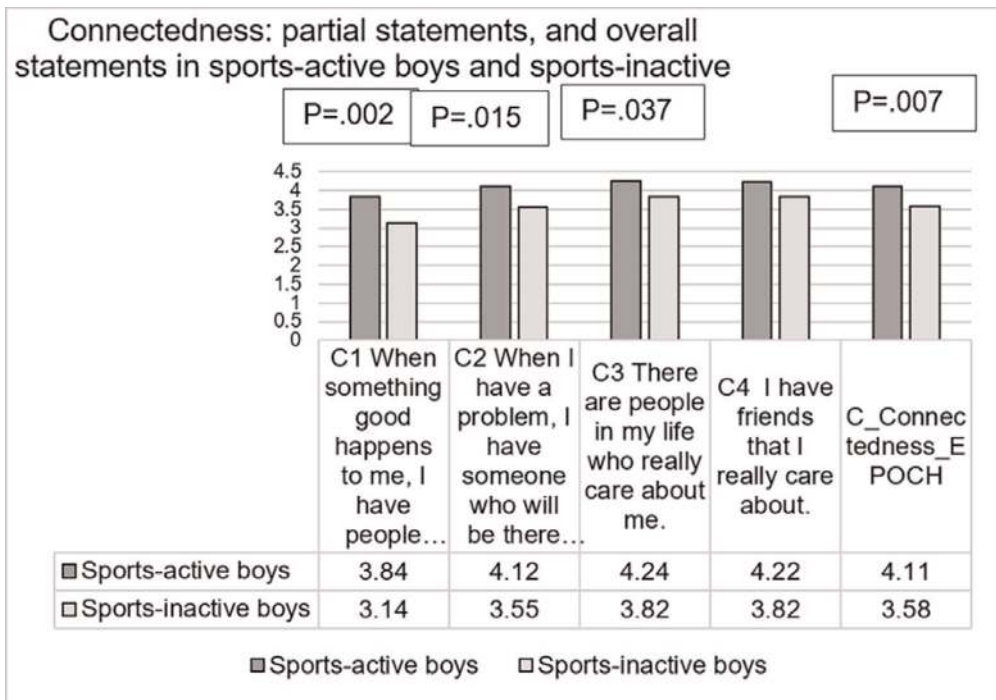


Figure 14. Connectedness: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys.

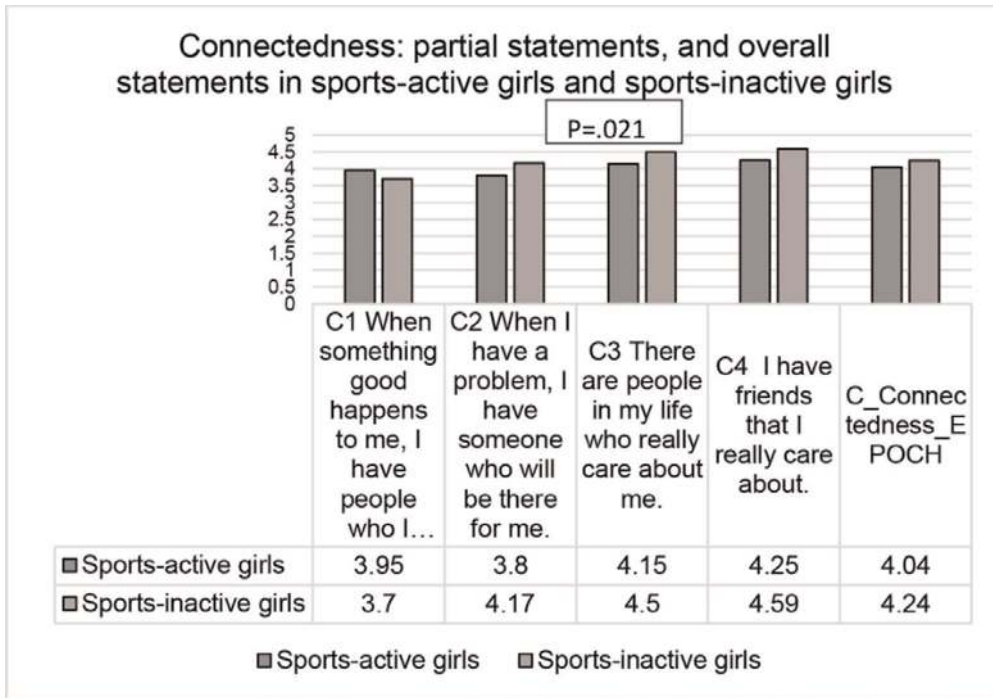


Figure 15.
 Connectedness: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

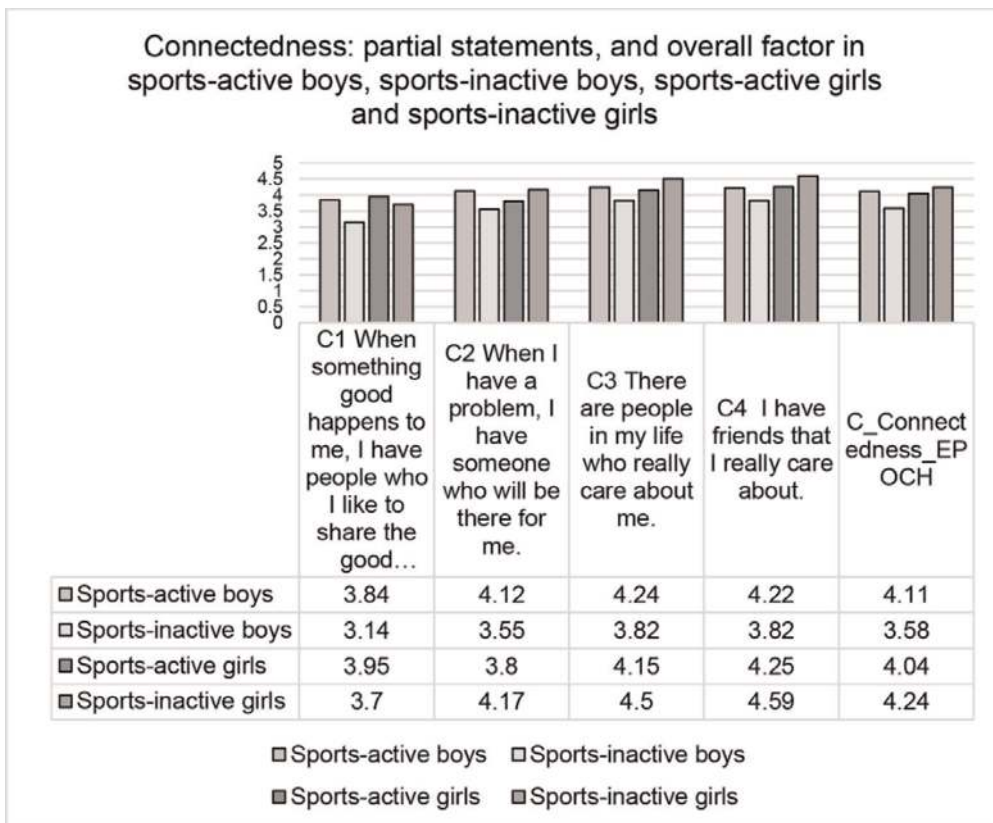


Figure 16.
 Connectedness: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

active girls; between sports-inactive boys and sports-inactive girls ($U = 824.5$, $p < .001$) in favour to sports-inactive girls. No statistical significance was found in the comparison between sports-active boys and sports-active girls, and between sports-active boys and sports-inactive girls, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

3.5 The factor: Happiness

3.5.1 Comparison of happiness in boys and girls

Boys dominated in two statements over girls and reached statistical significance in H1 ($U = 4926$, $p = .047$), and in H4 ($U = 4741.5$, $p = .015$). Girls dominated over boys also in two statements but without statistical significance. Overall happiness factor did not reach statistical significance though boys presented a stronger opinion of feeling happiness compared to girls (**Figure 17**).

3.5.2 Comparison of happiness in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys

When comparing sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys (**Figure 18**), we found statistical significance in all compared statements and also in the overall happiness factor: H1 ($U = 665.5$, $p < .001$), H2 ($U = 311.5$, $p < .001$), H3 ($U = 660$, $p < .001$), H4 ($U = 880$, $p = .005$), overall happiness factor H ($U = 389.5$, $p < .001$).

3.5.3 Comparison of happiness in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

Three statements from the happiness factor out of four achieved statistical significance in the comparison of values between sports-active and sports-inactive girls in favour of sports-active girls (**Figure 19**): H1 ($U = 1059$, $p = .001$), H3 ($U = 982.5$, $p < .001$), H4 ($U = 907.5$, $p < .001$). The overall happiness factor also shows the statistical significance of the compared differences: H ($U = 940.5$, $p < .001$).

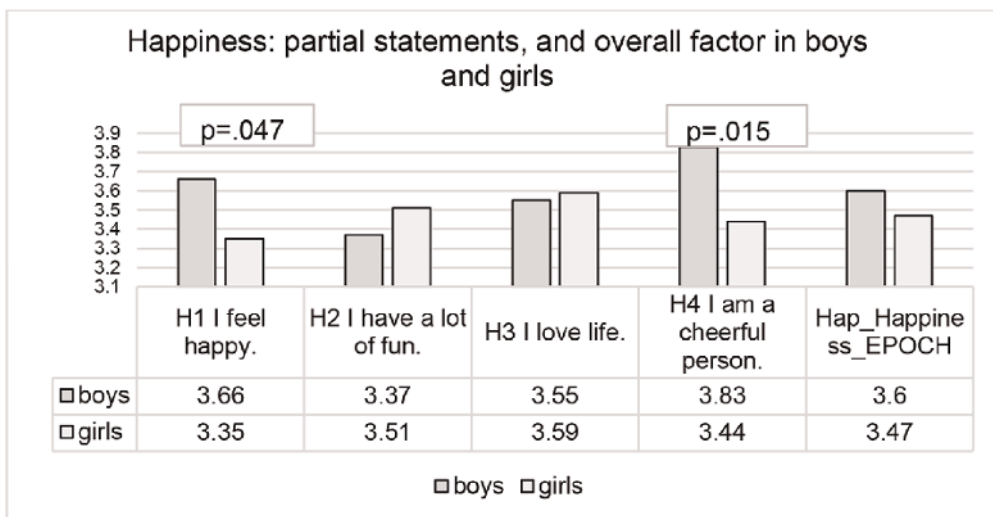


Figure 17. Happiness: Partial statements and overall factor in boys and girls.

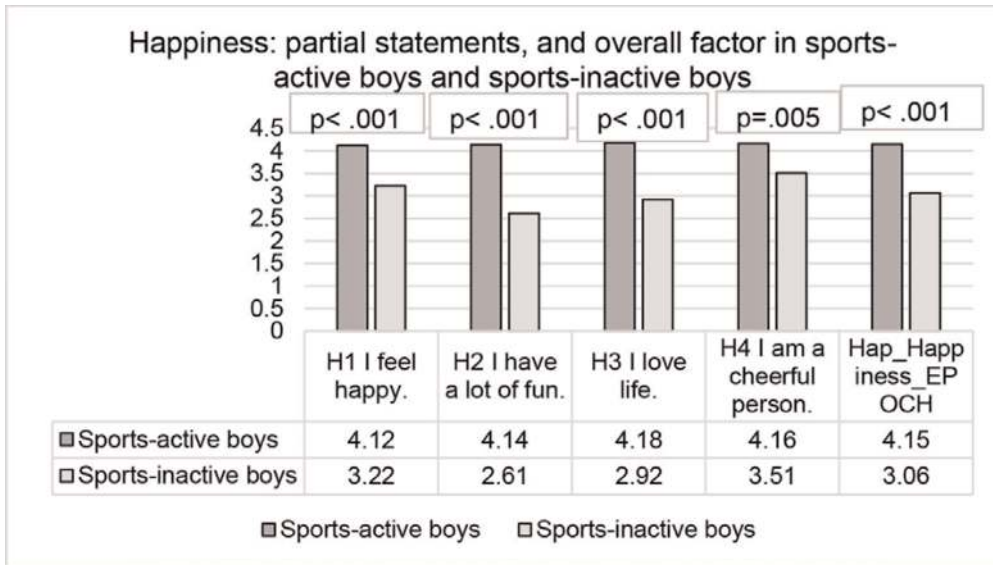


Figure 18.
 Happiness: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys.

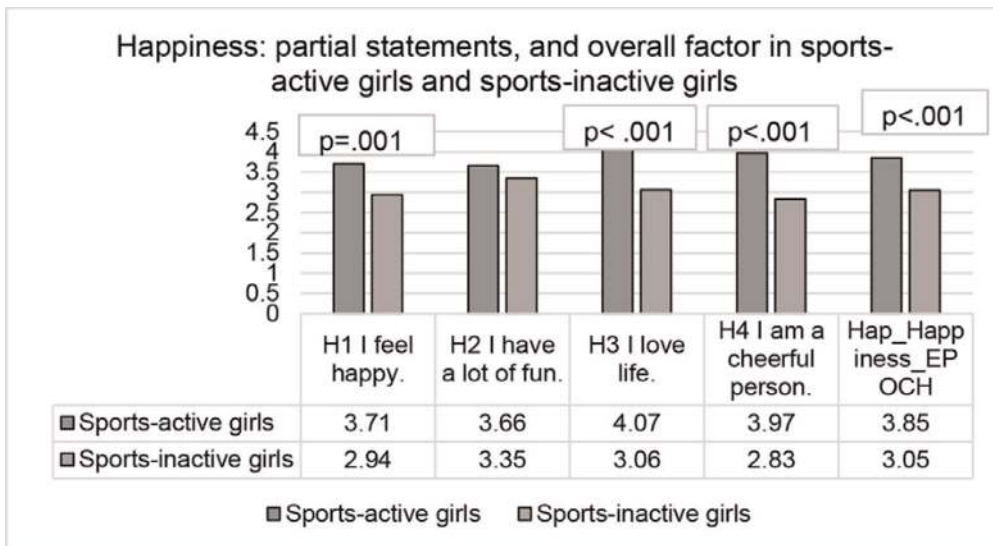


Figure 19.
 Happiness: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

3.5.4 Comparison of happiness, partial statements and overall factor in sports-active, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

The highest value of the score for happiness is given for the statement H3 'I love life' in sports-active boys (4.18). The lowest score reached the statement H2 'I have a lot of fun' in sports-inactive boys (2.61) (**Figure 20**).

Comparing each sample to other samples in the overall happiness factor, we found several statistically significant differences: between sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys ($U = 389.5$, $p < .001$) in favour of sports-active boys; between sports-

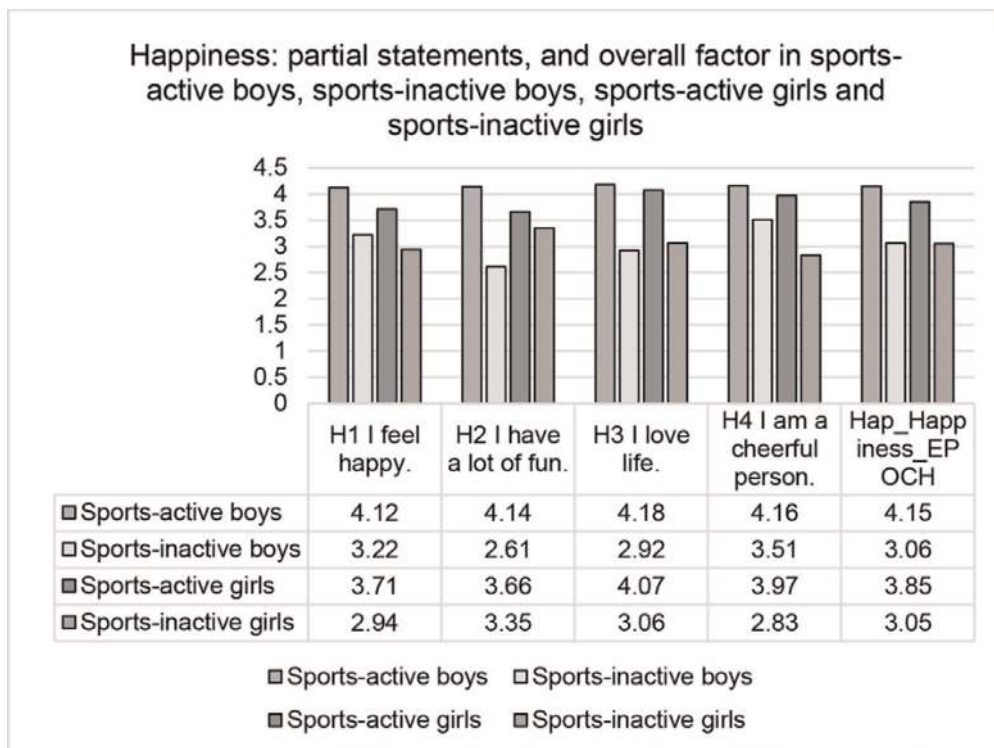


Figure 20. *Happiness: Partial statements and overall factor in sports-active boys, sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.*

active boys and sports-active girls ($U = 1070.5, p = .007$) in favour of sports-active boys; between sports-active boys and sports-inactive girls ($U = 614.5, p < .001$) in favour of sports-active boys; between sports-inactive boys and sports-active girls ($U = 746, p < .001$) in favour of sports-active girls; between sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls ($U = 940.5, p < .001$) in favour of sports-active girls. No statistical significance in the overall happiness factor of EPOCH measure of adolescent well-being was found only in the comparison between sports-inactive boys and sports-inactive girls.

Who feels the strongest feelings of happiness from the research samples? In first place are sports-active boys, in second place are sports-active girls, in third place are boys, in fourth place are girls, in fifth place are sports-inactive boys and in the last, sixth place are sports-inactive girls (**Figure 21**).

Taking into consideration the frequency of sports activity per week and the feelings of happiness regardless of gender and mode of sports activity (**Table 8**), we found that the happiest people are those people whose sports activities represent frequency six times a week.

Statistical significance was recorded between all possible comparisons that could have been performed from no sporting activity (0) to performing sporting activities seven times a week.

3.6 Overall well-being

Participation in sporting activity as a variable of the higher level of psychological well-being is consistent with the authors [41, 42].

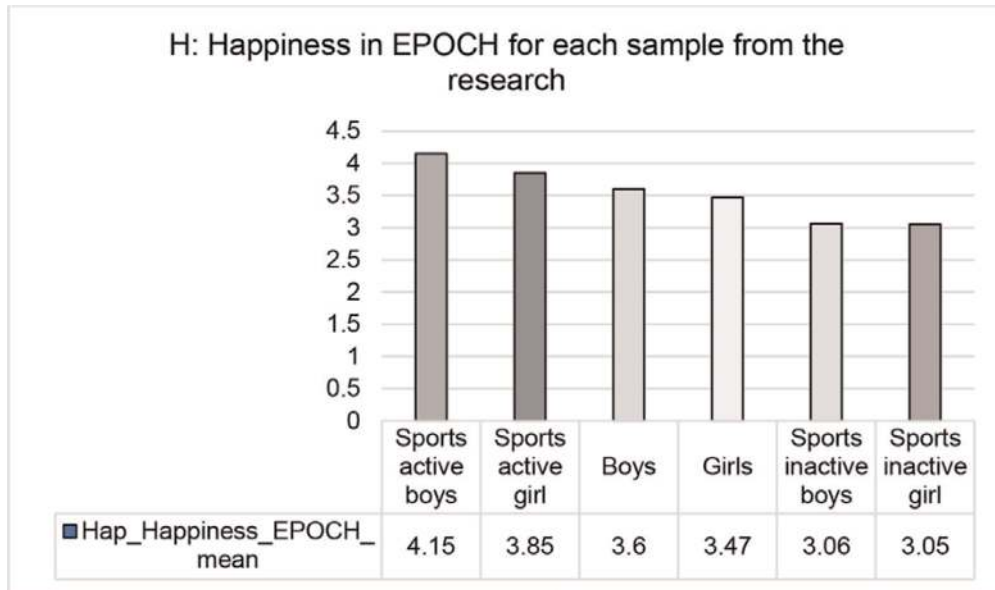


Figure 21.
H: Happiness in EPOCH for each sample from the research.

Sporting activity frequency	Score	Standard deviation
six times a week	4375	.158
four times a week	41,771	.990
seven times a week	4	.559
three times a week	38,424	.746
once	37,589	.661
five times a week	34,444	.829
twice a week	31,774	.878
0	26,576	1.032

Table 8.
Ranking based on the frequency of sports activity per week and the achieved score for feeling happiness.

3.6.1 Comparison of overall well-being in boys and girls

We found two statistically significant differences in comparison between overall engagement factors, overall perseverance factor, overall optimism factor, overall connectedness factor and overall happiness factor in boys and girls (**Figure 22**). The significant differences are in the overall optimism factor ($U = 3852.5$, $p < .001$) in favour of boys, and in the overall connectedness factor ($U = 4634.5$, $p = .010$) in favour of girls.

3.6.2 Comparison of overall well-being in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys

When comparing sports-active and sports-inactive girls, we found four statistical differences from the five overall factors from the EPOCH measure of adolescent well-being (**Figure 23**): perseverance ($U = 748$, $p < .001$), optimism ($U = 832$, $p = .002$),

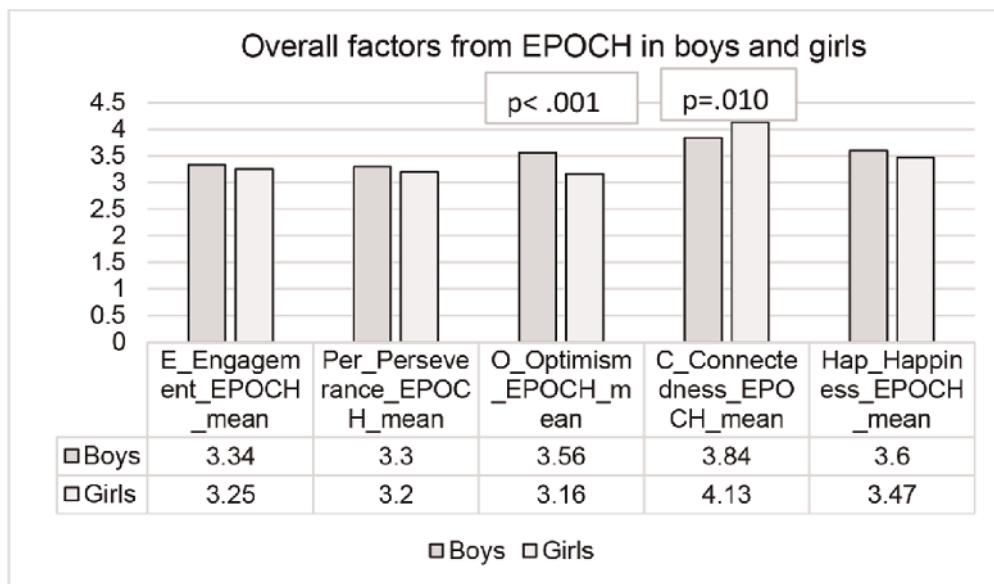


Figure 22.
Overall factors from EPOCH in boys and girls.

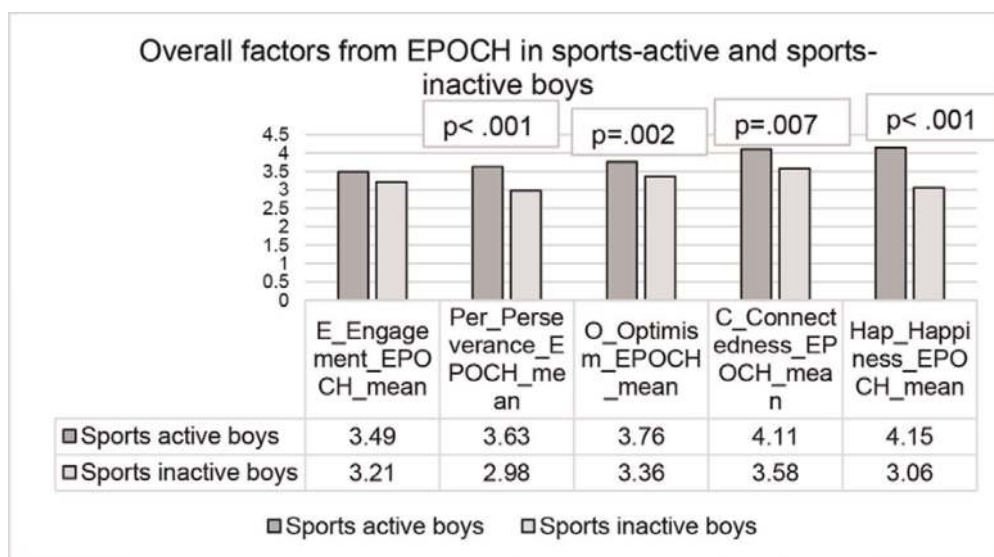


Figure 23.
Overall factors from EPOCH in sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys.

connectedness ($U = 883, p = .007$) and happiness ($U = 389.5, p < .001$). All comparisons are in favour of sports-active boys.

No statistically significant difference was found in the overall engagement factor.

3.6.3 Comparison of overall well-being in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls

Sports-active girls with compared to sports-inactive achieved four statistically significant differences from five possible: engagement ($U = 1265.5, p = .032$), perseverance ($U = 1258.5, p = .029$), optimism ($U = 1297, p = .048$), happiness ($U = 940.5, p < .001$). All comparisons are in favour of sports-active girls (**Figure 24**).

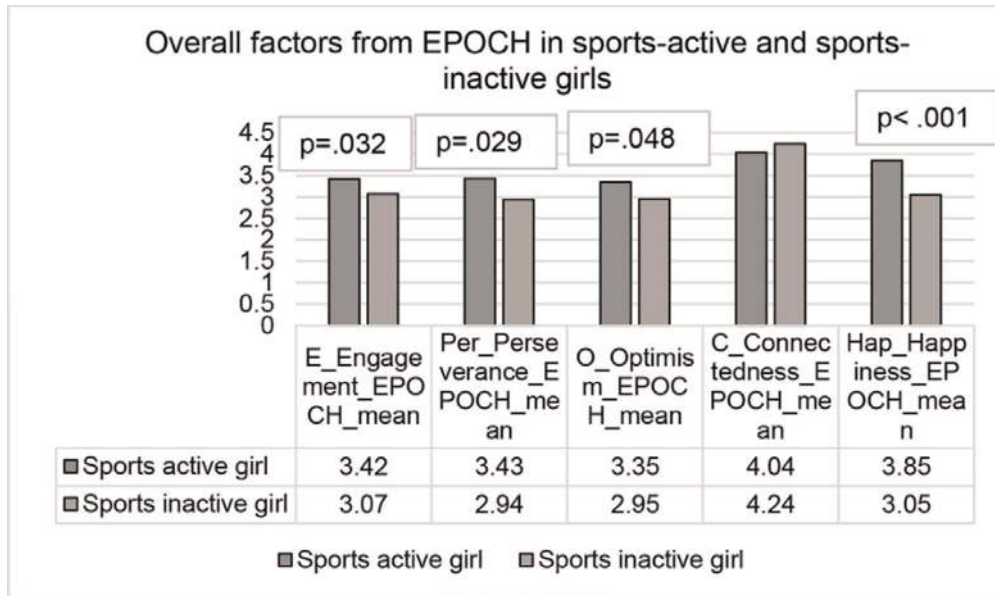


Figure 24.
 Overall factors from EPOCH in sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls.

No statistically significant difference was found in the overall connectedness factor, but the interesting thing is that sports-inactive girls scored higher in this connectedness factor compared to sports-active girls.

3.6.4 Comparison of overall well-being in sports-active and sports-inactive boys, and sports-active and sports-inactive girls

The comparison of the overall well-being from EPOCH showed statistical significance: between sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys ($U = 662, p < .001$) in favour of sports-active boys; between sports-active boys and sports-active girls ($U = 1087, p = .009$) in favour of sports-active boys; between sports-active boys and

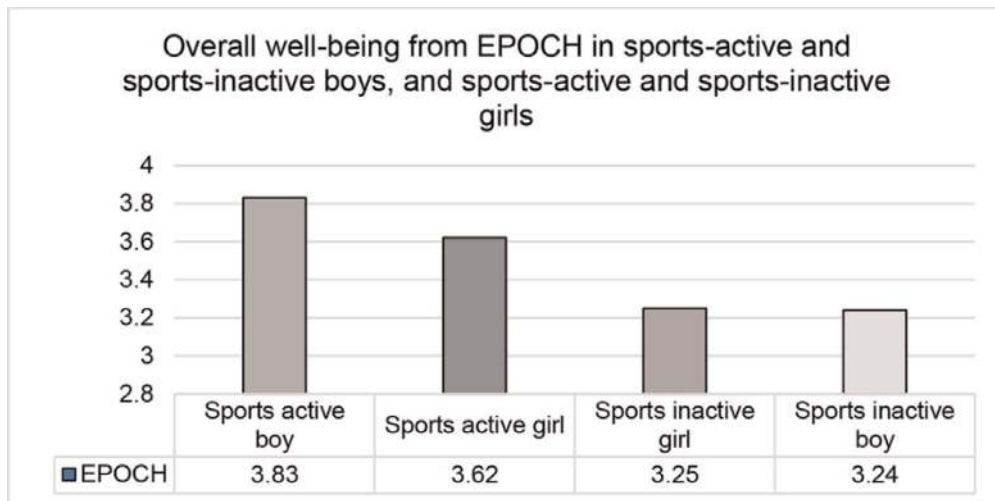


Figure 25.
 Overall well-being from EPOCH in sports-active boys and girls, and sports-inactive boys and girls.

Samples	Number of comparisons in partial statements and the overall factors of EPOCH	Statistical significance in favour of the sample
Sports-active boys	41	34
Sports-inactive boys	41	1
Sports-active girls	41	26
Sports-inactive girls	41	1

Table 9.
Number of comparisons and the statistical significance obtained.

sports-inactive girls ($U = 630.5, p < .001$) in favour of sports-active boys; between sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls ($U = 1134.5, p = .004$) in favour of sports-active girls; between sports-active girls and sports-inactive boys ($U 1064.5, p = .004$) in favour of sports-active girls.

No statistical significance was found between sports-inactive girls and sports-inactive boys (**Figure 25**).

When counting all mentioned comparisons from this research, we found that out of 41 possible comparisons, the sports-active boys obtained statistical significance in the differences of these comparisons in up to 34, which represents 82.93% of that (**Table 9**). In these comparisons, sports-active girls obtained statistical significance in 26 cases, which represents 63.42% of that. Sports-inactive boys along with sports-inactive girls obtained only 2.44% of statistically significant differences from possible comparisons. In the overall acquisition of statistically significant differences in comparison, 54.84% obtained sports-active boys, 41.94% sports-active girls and 3.22% sports-inactive boys and girls.

4. Discussion

This study examined the well-being and feelings of happiness in boys and girls, in sports-active boys and girls and sports-inactive boys and girls. It is very important to measure feelings by focusing on positive feelings.

Emotional well-being was discussed by [43], and there were higher scores for positive emotions than for negative emotions. One of the contributing factors to positive emotions and feelings of happiness is physical activity and sport.

Subjective well-being and engagement in sport are the content of an article [44]. They found very similar results to our results.

Investigation of the effects of sports participation on young adolescents' emotional well-being of feelings and well-being presented [45]. Their findings gave evidence that greater participation in sports is positively associated with emotional well-being and presented that exercise and sport link with psychological health. The findings [46] supported the statement that physical activity can have long-term effects on well-being. Greater participation in sports was associated with higher odds of happiness and lower odds of socio-emotional difficulties in the study of [47].

All EPOCH factors were related to greater life satisfaction and less depression [28], more optimism, connectedness and happiness than engagement or perseverance. The next result of the research of the authors is that physical activity was more strongly related to perseverance, optimism and happiness than to engagement and connectedness. In several samples of their research, the connectedness, optimism and happiness factors were very strongly correlated with one and another and finally as positive

sociability factors. The findings [8] resulted in outcomes, which are statistically significant that sporting activity has a more positive impact on subjective dimensions of quality of life in adolescent sports-active boys and girls than in adolescent sports-inactive boys and girls.

The decrease in physical activity during the last time in period of the COVID-19 pandemic brought evidence that the lack of sporting activities was mainly represented by activities related to outdoor sports (outdoor exercising, swimming in the pool, downhill skiing), exercising in a fitness centre or playing sports games, where the presence of other players is required (football in men and volleyball in women) [10]. In the review [48], happiness is regarded as a correlate of genetic determinants (genes, personality), circumstantial and demographic factors (gender, age, intelligence, wealth, religion, societal condition, health) and individual control (social relationship, marriage and children, leisure, goals). We also as Refs. [49, 50] get the result that boys are more optimistic than girls. The results [51] indicated that participation in recreational physical activity is positively associated with well-being during adolescence. Young people who participated in any recreational physical activity are more likely to have better well-being and there appeared to be an additional benefit for each additional hour of participation [51]. However, their findings suggest that organised sports participation was even more strongly associated with the outcomes of well-being in adolescence.

In summary, participation in organised sports appears to offer a unique benefit to well-being above and beyond participation in other recreational physical activities. Therefore, while quality experiences of recreational physical activity are evidently beneficial for well-being, promoting participation in organised sports can offer greater value to those who are already active [51].

The results of Ref. [52] from the EPOCH questionnaire used showed that most of the developmental assets experienced by Iranian female adolescents were in the moderate range and the overall scores of subjective well-being were in the good range.

The focus on well-being and happiness is also growing in the research of experts in psychology, education, sociology and philosophy. In the discussion, we can present the question by Deleuze [53] 'Is pleasure the filling of a lack, or the perfection of an activity?' We all know that physical activity and sports sometimes hurt and here we can join next Deleuze's idea that one must suffer for a while because happiness without suffering is inherent. A little pain for a happy life is only a very small price that one should pay. In many cases, exercise is overcoming certain feelings that are related to the inadequacy of some not adapted organs of the body that participate in the movement. But the feeling of mastering the exercise brings the emotion of happiness and mastering the exercise even with certain obstacles ultimately gradually causes the body and its organs to adapt to such movement. And as philosopher [54] wrote that 'Happiness is the feeling that power increases – that resistance is being overcome', and that is exactly how we described suffering by exercising. The same author [55] in his book argued that happiness is not found by default but is achieved as the result of hard work. Nietzsche was aware of the theme of happiness in his works and thoughts [54–56]. We should bear in mind as Nietzsche that happiness is made of moments not years, there in life are happy moments but not happy ages. If we are happy all the time, the feelings of happiness would lose their value that's why we need to have also obstacles to be overcome so that our power can increase. Exercising and sports can increase our inner power not only our muscle strength. Exercising and sports can increase our happiness and well-being. The evidence is in this study.

5. Conclusion

Physical activity and sports are irreplaceable activities for young people. Particularly after the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical activity decreased, because physical education in school was mostly not taught online and also because there was a curfew and businesses that provided physical activities and sports were closed. Participation in physical activities and sports is closely related to well-being and feelings of happiness, as shown by our findings, where sports-active boys were statistically significantly happier than sports-inactive boys, and also sports-active girls were happier than sports-inactive girls also on the significance level. The happiest were those who exercised six times a week.

5.1 Limitations of the study

For this research and data collection, we investigated overall well-being among adolescents on the basis of the EPOCH measure for adolescent well-being we divided into research samples: boys and girls, sports-active boys and sports-inactive boys, sports-active girls and sports-inactive girls without other socio-demographic variables and physical developmental attributes. It is necessary to carry out further such research and also by the larger number of members of the research sample.

Practical implications

A practical implication of our findings is that people nevertheless, male or female, both can benefit in overall well-being and feelings of happiness when they will participate in sporting activities not only as a member of some sports clubs but also as the person who decides to take a part in any sports activity, even spontaneous and the best occurrence of sporting activities in a week for the best feeling of well-being and happiness is the occurrence six times in a week.

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There were no conflicts of interest.

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Section 2

Psychological Perspective



Chapter 5

Happiness at Work: A Psychological Perspective

Nishi Misra and Shobhna Srivastava

Abstract

Modern human beings spend their maximum amount of time in the work setting. Hence, how they feel at the workplace has a direct influence on their overall quality of life. Therefore, understanding what makes us happy or unhappy at work is very crucial. Surprisingly, there is an absence of a sound theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding the concept of happiness from the organizational perspective. For developing a conceptual framework for happiness at work, two components are relevant -the external work environment and the internal mental mapping. The concept of happiness in psychology has been equated with pleasure, a mixture of pleasure, engagement and meaning, or with the concept of well-being. A precise definition of happiness is missing. There have been numerous studies on the contributions of positive psychology to happiness and its influence on employees' well-being and productivity. Most researches concentrate on the external happiness of individuals. But in the future, organizations need to focus on the intrinsic happiness of employees as well, to get the best outcome at the workplace. This chapter covers the causes and consequences of happiness in the workplace. Ways of inculcating happiness at the workplace to increase organizational productivity and create happy employees have also been discussed.

Keywords: happiness, engagement, productivity, workplace, well-being

1. Introduction

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."
— Mahatma Gandhi

In the present age, we have been bestowed with the opportunity to witness many pinnacles of scientific and technological ingenuity, the comforts of life that were once beyond imagination are now an everyday reality. There has been an encouraging increase in the number of unorthodox work opportunities and job avenues, where one can transform not only their hobbies into economic pursuits, but also align their personal goals with their professional ones. People are looking toward being happy at work.

Thomas Edison echoed these sentiments and claimed, "I never did a day's work in my life, it was all fun" [1]. More recently, the late Steve Jobs (2005) put his own spin on it by saying, "The only way to do great work is to love what you do," (p. 3) [1].

The construct of happiness has been the subject of intrigue between scientists and philosophers, alike. The Eastern philosophers equated it with self-realization, while the West spoke of Hedonia and Eudemonia.

Aristotle defined the concepts of Hedonics, where happiness is a result of an individual's degree of experience of pleasure versus pain, pleasant feelings vs judgment. Eudaimonic views of happiness underline doing what is virtuous, morally right, true, and meaningful to one's self and realizing one's potential [2].

The rise of positive psychology in the past decade has lent the abstract concept of happiness to empirical research. Happiness has been equated with emotional well-being. Emotional well-being supports the eudemonism philosophy that consists of one's life having a sense of meaning and purpose, the pursuit of excellence, and intense involvement in activities [3].

Psychological well-being comprises six distinct dimensions of wellness (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance) [4].

It was believed previously that success at the workplace had no connection with the happiness level of employees. People do not expect their jobs as a path to happiness. It was neither necessary to like the people with whom you work nor even share their values. "Work is *not* personal," the thinking went. It was regarded as drudgery that should be avoided if at all possible. Still, people worked because working is a reflection of being a responsible member of society and the money that we earn from doing work allows us to have a comfortable life.

It was believed that happiness came from relationships, family, and friends. In the business environment, major concerns were profits, demand, supply, efficiency, and productivity. Happiness was rarely given any attention.

The situation began to change a few decades ago when economics and management started discussing about happiness. Colleges and Universities introduced Happiness courses in their curriculum such as "What makes employees happy"?, "Foundations of Happiness at Work," or "How to Create an Enjoyable Work Environment." The Happiness Research Institute in Denmark came up and many books on Happiness flooded the market, like *How to Be Happy at Work* [5], *Powered by Happy: How to Get and Stay Happy at Work* [6], *Work Happy: What Great Bosses Know* [7], and others.

Research has shown that 50% of our happiness is genetically predetermined, while 40% is the result of our attitude, and just 10% is based on the circumstances of our lives [8]. Therefore, happiness depends a lot on how we react to situations, and that's something we all can control. As a result, even if an employee is in a comfortable environment, he/she will be unhappy at work if he/she has a bad attitude. Embracing a positive mindset filled with gratitude and compassion will lead to happiness at work.

In sum, it appears that happiness is a function of environmental events and circumstances, stable tendencies in the person, and the fit between the two. The important connection between happiness and production has been emphasized in research [9]. Statistical data revealed that happy employees were 12% more productive on average. Research also demonstrated that because of happiness at the workplace, stock prices grew an average 19%, as opposed to a mere 10% for companies with low morale. A Gallup State of the American Workplace study published in 2012 [10] revealed 41% lower health-related costs in employees with high overall well-being and 62% lower costs compared with employees who were "suffering." Greater productivity and performance were related to employee happiness, which in turn benefitted the employer has been reported [11]. Happy people are more productive; therefore,

organizations can benefit by improving work environments and facilitating unhappy employees to become happier [12].

This made the managers believe that happiness is a way to boost productivity. In the corporate world, happiness gained increased attention. Companies today spend much money on happiness coaches and consultants. Google has a Chief Happiness Officer who is responsible for maintaining high morale among employees.

“We spend more of our lives engaged at work than any other single activity” [13]. This statement reflects the reality of the modern world, especially, during post-pandemic, where the boundary between home and work has diminished. People now find themselves spending more time at their work desk because the time consumed in traveling and getting ready for work has reduced to almost nothing. Now the home has become synonymous with workplace.

With so much of human resource investment, it is now more than ever important to reiterate the importance of employee happiness at workplace. Employee happiness leads to positive emotions, that may be linked to ameliorating physical illness or disease [14].

2. Happiness vs well-being

Although the terms are often used interchangeably, there are shades of difference between them. While “hedonism” has been linked with happiness and pleasurable experiences, “eudamonia” corresponds with a holistic sense of well-being. Well-being further forms happiness as it encompasses many positive emotions such as contentment, realizing one’s potential, developing a sense of purpose, and establishing positive relationships in life.

‘Wellbeing’ is a state of contentment whereas “happiness” is a feeling of complete fulfillment, something that is transient and is experienced by all of us at some time or another. There are occasions that make us happy and we tend to cherish the memories of those moments. By contrast, ‘well-being’ can be sustained over a longer period of time. It includes a set of activities that we carry out to keep ourselves well. Well-being is a gestalt concept that emphasizes happiness but also encompasses domains that support a fulfilling life. Well-being at work can be attained by living a complete and fulfilled life.

Deiner et al. [15] linked well-being with psychological flourishing which is an individual’s perceived success. It also includes traits such as optimism, purposeful life, social relationships, engagement in activities, and self-esteem. Davidson [16] speaks of four dimensions of well-being: (i) Differentiation: the ability to distance and break free from negative life patterns and develop one’s own value systems, (ii) Attention: the ability to redirect attention and focus on where one wants; being mindful and receptive, rather than reactive, (iii) Goodness: believing in the basic goodness of our fellow human beings and ourselves (iv) Resilience: An ability to persevere when things become difficult

The concept of happiness has been explained by Kahneman [17] who says that there are two systems that relate to feeling good. The first is the actual feeling of the here and now. The second is the remembering, reflecting, and narrating system that decides how satisfied we are with the experience and what was good for us. He believes that we ought to be focused primarily on the first system. Happiness is a central but only one component of well-being. It is the affective element of the subjective experiential element. Happiness can exist without well-being, but well-being can’t

exist without happiness. It leads us to physical and emotional aspects which every person is trying to blend into a single and harmonious mixture. Happiness, in today's common usage, is more or less synonymous with "subjective wellbeing" – with the psychological experience of living well. Someone can feel happy or experience life satisfaction without really living well. Happiness is an abstract concept that is difficult to define as there are complex meanings associated with what is really good life.

The theory of Authentic Happiness [18] states that happiness could be analyzed into three different elements: positive emotion (what we feel e.g. pleasure, ecstasy, warmth, comfort etc.), engagement or flow (concentrated attention using cognitive and emotional resources), and meaning (serving something bigger than the self). Each of these elements is better defined and more measurable than happiness.

From the viewpoint of evaluation of happiness, there are two different kinds of distinctions: objective and subjective. Do we want to measure health or the experience of being healthy?, Beauty or the sense of looking ok?, achievements or the sense of achievement? These are *evaluative* considerations. Is one interested in measuring subjective happiness or objective happiness?

Happiness is more close to "living well" whereas well-being is used with a narrower reference to being in good shape physically and mentally [19]. Living well means living an active life and fostering social happiness. Happiness denotes a dynamic concept of "living well" than just having a condition of well-being.

3. Happiness and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)

Organizational citizenship behavior is a voluntary behavior that is not a part of a person's job description or is paid for, through the organization but it helps in the betterment of the organization and improves the overall work environment [20].

Happiness at work and organizational learning capability has been considered as the drivers of Organizational Citizenship Behavior [21].

It has been suggested that happiness at the workplace is one of the major mediators toward the development of organizational citizenship behavior because it creates a feeling of job satisfaction among the employees. Employee happiness and positive attitude toward their work have been linked with a greater quality of customer service [22].

Happy employees are more likely to produce long-term organizational success and sustain high performance over time and deliver key results. OCB is closely linked with organizational culture, an environment that promotes appreciation and reinforcement has been linked with greater employee retention [23]. Happy employees outperform unhappy employees [24].

4. Contributors of happiness at workplace

The contributors can be categorized into physical factors and psychological factors. Physical factors include earning a high salary, affording a home, a car or nice clothes, job characteristics, and the like.

At the psychological level, factors include learning a skill, getting more exposure, facing a challenge and a sense of expansion of belongingness, organizational pride, authentic relationships, and a sense of meaning are important. Some major factors are discussed as under:

4.1 Wage satisfaction and equity

Wage satisfaction depends not so much on how people earn, but on how much people earn in comparison with others. Taking from the hedonic perspective employees feel gainfully compensated and happy when they witness pay parity [25].

Another strong contributor to happiness at workplace is a sense of equity, where the workers are treated respectfully irrespective of their position or wage drawn. There is fairness in workload distribution and overall job security [26].

4.2 Job characteristics

A meta-analytic study has shown that five climate dimensions of role, job, leader, work group, and organization were consistently related to job satisfaction and other job attitudes [27]. The conceptualization of job characteristics has been expanded to include not just the five motivational factors from Hackman and Oldham, but several additional motivational factors, social factors, and work context factors such as those positively related to happiness at work, and collectively explain more than half of the variance in job satisfaction and 87% of the variance in organizational commitment [28].

4.3 Dispositional characteristics

Dispositional positive affect has been linked to better performance in managerial decision-making and interpersonal tasks [29]. It is also known to predict career success. Happy people earn more, perform superior than their peers, and are more helpful [24]. In general, individuals high on dispositional positive affectivity and core self-evaluations (comprised of internal locus of control, self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, and emotional stability) tend to be happier at work as well as in other areas of life [30–32].

Happy people are less likely to experience periods of unemployment [33] and more likely to succeed in their job search. They are charming interviewers [34]. Their cheerfulness attracts social support from colleagues, thus, enabling them to perform better.

4.4 Connectedness

Organizations that promote community building; a sense of belongingness in the employees, increase their pride, and help in cultivating social identity [35].

Research in well-being focuses on “social-capital,” which is considered very important for the quality of life and higher levels of happiness. It includes making friends at work, as well as through the community.

4.5 Autonomy and decision making

Research has found that job autonomy has a positive impact on employees’ mental and physical well-being. It increases employees’ intrinsic motivation, engagement, and work performance [36]. It can also reduce mental burnout and emotional exhaustion in workers, and also reduce the desire to change jobs [37]. More importantly, it has long been considered an effective management tool to increase job satisfaction [38].

4.6 Engagement at the workplace

To be fully engaged and happy, three things are needed:

- a. **A meaningful vision of the future:** People learn and change when they have a personal vision that is linked to an organizational vision. People want to be able to see the future and know how they fit in [39].
- b. **A sense of purpose:** Employees want to feel that their work matters, and that their contributions help to achieve something really important. They want to know that they and their organizations are doing something *big* that matters to other people.
- c. **Great relationships:** Leaders, managers, and employees prefer close, trusting, and supportive relationships that are hugely important to their state of mind and their willingness contribute to a team.

Those who are engaged in their jobs work harder and smarter [40]. Disengaged, unhappy people aren't any fun to work with, don't add much value, and impact our organizations (and our economy) in profoundly negative ways. It's even worse when leaders are disengaged because they infect others with their attitude. Their emotions and mindset impact others' moods and performance tremendously.

4.7 Work-life balance

The ability of employees to deal with the successful combination of work, family responsibilities, and personal life is crucial for both employers and employees. Work-life balance is established when a person has an equal level of priorities in relation to their career growth and the requirements of personal life. A positive work-life balance reduces employee stress, reduces the risk of burnout, and creates greater well-being. This positively affects not only the employee him/herself but also the employer [41]. Organizations/workplaces should look toward promoting a culture where the employees, enjoy democratic freedom, can achieve subjective well-being, and find meaning in their lives, in other words are able to lead a happy and fulfilling life.

4.8 Meaningfulness of work

Meaningful work gives essence to what we do and what brings a sense of fulfillment to our lives [42]. When people have a sense of meaning in their work, they become more committed to the organization. People feel happy when they pursue meaningful activities [43]. If employees perceive the worth and meaning of work, they may be happy to do their work [44, 45]. Meaningful work connects employees with their workplace and experiences a high level of job satisfaction and job security.

4.9 Flow in work

When a person finds his/her flow and performs to his/her full potential, he/she is productively engaged and deeply immersed in an activity that is "difficult," but well adapted to his talents and he/she strives to achieve a meaningful objective [6]. Thomas Carlyle [7] wrote, "Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other

blessedness”. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant. Self-consciousness disappears and the sense of time becomes distorted [45]. It transforms the self. Such personalities are referred as “autotelic personality”. They report positive experiences when in flow, more cheerful, stronger, more active, concentrated, creative, and satisfied.

4.9.1 Leadership

A correlation of 0.77 between charismatic leadership and subordinate job satisfaction has been reported [46]. Leader-member exchange is also fairly strongly related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment [47]. Trust in the leader is a strong predictor of satisfaction and commitment [48]. Autonomy support displayed by leaders also appears to be important for follower satisfaction, well-being, and engagement [49, 50]. Recognition can be provided in a number of ways. Leaders have to find out what their employees value most and customize recognition accordingly by showing empathy toward them and providing them with succession planning and different opportunities to get high designation [51].

4.9.2 Connectedness

High-quality connections with others is an important source of happiness and energy for employees [52, 53]. In the book *Vital Friends* [54], it has been reported that individuals who said they had a best friend at work were seven times more likely to report being engaged in their job.

Thus, salary is not an important thing at the workplace. One may get a good salary but still may not be happy. What really makes employees rank their company well is the type of work they do, how well they are managed, and how well they are recognized for their work (The Career Bliss Team).

Happiness at work and having a positive attitude at the workplace is important for maintaining the efficiency of the organization and meeting organizational goals [11]. Happiness at work refers to a situation at work when human resources feel happy working, are resourceful and achieve the targeted goals, both at the individual and organizational level [55].

Researchers see happiness resulting from a combination of three or four basic factors. Annie McKee sees three components essential for happiness: a meaningful vision of the future, a sense of purpose, and great relationships at work. Others go as high as 10 or 15 ingredients, and a few point to an extensive list of dozens of factors contributing to happiness.

5. Is workplace happiness real?

A number of empirical studies have been conducted in the field of happiness but the theory about happiness is very weak. A lot of confusion exists in the way researchers understand happiness and its source. As a result, the knowledge has limited practical applicability.

The definition of happiness remains vague. Some researchers associate it with a good life while others identify happiness with subjective choices that people make and others look to culture as the determining factor of what we regard as happiness.

Authors like André Spicer and Carl Cederström [56] created a corporate storm when they challenged the notion that happiness is good. The authors believe, backed by research, that happiness can do more harm than good at the workplace (Harvard Business Review).

Happiness is personal. Everyone has a particular definition of what being happy means. Consciously pursuing happiness can actually drain the sense of joy we usually get from the really good things we experience.

Not every employee wants to be promoted or receive a title. For many people “personal time” is becoming more important than financial rewards. Thus, for both individuals and organizations, happiness is important at the workplace [11, 57]. The best places to work are those in which people can flourish and be their best selves – instead of pretending to be someone else five days a week. Such a workplace also gives people flexibility and autonomy as to where and how they work, built on a culture of growth and trust [58].

6. How leaders can create a happy workplace

Specific tips can be followed to create a happy workplace by motivating each and every team member to work more efficiently.

6.1 Host engaging and interactive team-building events

Nowadays, more and more offices understand the value of making time to have fun in the office by holding interesting team-building events through which feeling of contentment and fulfillment is nurtured. These activities empower teams to collaborate, boost morale, improve communication, and bond with each other. Employees play together, laugh together, and resolve issues together. This allows them to get to know each other and helps in building trust and connection [59].

6.2 Providing wellness programs and challenges

Wellness programs are focused on bringing positivity and a healthy lifestyle for all employees. Benefits may include yearly health check-ups, unlimited doctor consultations, and access to a one-on-one personalized stress therapy program. Benefits can be offered beyond the basics. The salary of employees can be supplemented by offering an extra level of life insurance or disability insurance to protect their incomes. Other ancillary benefits, such as dental and optical wellness can also be offered. Gym memberships and transit benefits are great perks to keep employees happy and healthy. “It is important to provide higher benefits so that the employees know that they as well as their families are truly cared” – *Bobby Hotaling, president and CEO of The Hotaling Group* [60].

6.3 Physical activity interventions

Employees’ happiness can be targeted by engaging them in physical activity programs such as walking programs, yoga, light resistance training, and others. Other physical exercises can be a combination of muscle relaxation, strengthening, coordination, and flexibility exercises, yoga intervention, aerobics, and weight-training courses Workplace interventions have been reported to significantly reduce body weight, BMI, and waist circumference [61].

6.4 Mental health interventions

Not only the physical health but **the** mental health of employees is equally important. People are often reluctant to discuss mental health problems, especially at work. Eliminating mental health issues such as depression and anxiety would increase employee happiness. Mental health issues can be dealt in organizations by building a culture that prioritizes psychological well-being. Mindfulness training, as well as cognitive-behavioral training, resiliency training and selection, optimization, and compensation (SOC) training, has been shown to increase employee well-being [62, 63]. It also led to an increase in job satisfaction. The mental health of employees can be evaluated by sending small surveys and getting their feedback on a scale of 1 to 5 as to how they are feeling regularly such as happiness, sadness, gratitude, frustration etc. This way a log of these scores can be maintained for weeks and an overall happiness score can be calculated.

6.5 Promote work-life balance

Work-life balance is beneficial for employees as well as for the organization. If there is a good balance between work and personal life, it leads to improved mental health. A healthy work-life balance is not only important for health and relationships, but it can also improve employee's productivity and ultimately performance. Research [64] has revealed that work-life balance and happiness positively and significantly affect employee performance. Beyond the 8 hours spent at the workplace, employees should practice disconnecting completely from their work and enjoy time for other commitments.

6.6 Employee engagement

Engagement is the wheel and happiness is the power. Engagement gives us direction and happiness creates energy. It's one thing knowing where you want to go, it's another to have the energy to take you there. Engaging employees in an organization helps to achieve job satisfaction and improves communication and team building. Engaged employees are happier, both at work and in their personal lives. This can be achieved by conducting weekly fun activities so that they can have some time off from work and relax. This also helps in building better relationships and bonds among the employees. Organizations with highly engaged employees experience increased customer satisfaction, profits, and employee productivity [65].

6.7 Inclusive and fair policy

Workers know they're worth more than money, so fostering an environment of respect is critical to employees' performance and retention [66]. Emphasis on creating a highly inclusive work culture and having fair and flexible policies for employees is very essential for increasing their happiness. Employees who get fair treatment in their workplace trust their employers and enjoy their work with more dedication. When employees feel that they are treated fairly, the relationship becomes strong, trust increases, and they enjoy their work.

6.8 Candid feedback

Leaders can create a psychologically safe work environment by emphasizing positive, authentic communication [67]. One can be both candid and caring. Candid

feedback is one of the best ways to elevate employee morale and create a more positive and happier work environment. It helps in remaining aligned with the organizational goals and in improving relationships with employees. If employees feel free to share what they think about the organization, management, and other employees, they are more likely to be happy and engaged with the organization.

6.9 Promote a positive work environment

Having a positive culture and workplace environment helps a lot, as it encourages teamwork and communication, which increases engagement and opportunities for teammates to learn from each other. Happiness leads to positivity.

It is essential for leaders to criticize constructively, whether it's a mistake made or goals are not achieved. Being approachable is the foundation of building a good relationship with employees. It helps in breaking down barriers between employer and employee so that an environment of trust can be created. A culture of hierarchy is not encouraged in such a workplace.

Leaders should lead by example by starting the day well, greeting everyone, praising co-workers for their efforts, asking them about their day, and making them feel valued. This can have a significant positive impact on workers' well-being. Even the smallest of team accomplishments can be celebrated. Holding of regular feedback sessions is also a good strategy that can be adopted.

6.9.1 Build a sense of fulfillment through a higher purpose

A clear purpose is essential to keep a team focused. It can also build a sense of fulfillment within colleagues. Leaders should have team members visualize *how* their individual contribution is part of a bigger mission. With everyone being on the same page, leaders can capitalize upon people's innate need to serve. Reminding the team of the purpose behind their responsibilities will help keep everyone's motivation high.

6.9.2 Offer more leisure time

The highest performers can be rewarded with incremental vacation days with family and friends. A team outing can also be arranged which fosters unity and solidarity among the workforce. This will rejuvenate the employees and will help them in experiencing happiness at work. Holidays and festivals can be celebrated with employees to create an enjoyable environment at the workplace, thus, creating a family environment at the workplace.

6.9.3 Create a career pathway

Leaders should arrange for regular career planning discussions and mentoring sessions with their employees. This will help in reducing employees leaving the organization [68]. *Maria Kraimer, business professor at the University of Iowa said that as a part of training and development, employees should be made aware of the different types of career paths or job opportunities available for them.*

6.9.4 Recognize and reward employees frequently

“Reward frequency is more important than size. It has been seen that smaller, frequent positive feedback and rewards will keep people happy longer than a single large,

infrequent happy event. Even the biggest awards or raises “wear out” in less than a year, with most employees responding better to small doses every few days” [69].

6.9.5 Office decor and ergonomics are essential

According to a study published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information, a direct relationship exists between chronic pain and neurocognitive function like attention, memory, processing speed, and executive functions. This negative cycle can be avoided by providing an ergonomically safe workplace. Doing so lowers the risk of injuries and chronic pain and reduces stress, significantly improving employees’ job satisfaction and performance.

Office decor and workplace ergonomics play an important role in determining employee creativity and productivity. Brightly painted walls, comfortable chairs, inspirational quotes, images on the walls, etc. can all help you to create a sense of motivation and happiness in the workplace.

6.9.6 Provide flexible hours to your employees

Provide flexible work hours and remote options for the employees. Flexible schedules significantly increase employee productivity and morale. They allow a level of freedom to create their work schedules and achieve work-life balance. It is a perfect solution to offer employees so that they can meet their responsibilities at both work and home. By offering such options, better talent can be attracted and retained at the workplace. It is reported [70] that the ability to change one’s schedule was associated with a reduced reported likelihood of job stress. A strong association was found between being able to take time off and three well-being outcomes, including a reduced reported likelihood of job stress, and an improved reported likelihood of job satisfaction and healthy days.

6.9.7 Cultivating character strengths

Character strengths-related person-job fit has been found to be associated with job performance and positive experiences at work [71]. Each individual has a unique configuration of personal or character strengths, talents, and preferences. Individuals should discover what their personal strengths are, and then design their job or career to allow them to cultivate these strengths and spend much of each day applying them while minimizing demands to complete activities that do not use strengths.

7. Conclusion

Happiness at the workplace involves the concept of well-being. Besides work that affects our well-being at the workplace, finances, relationships, and health also play an important part. If an individual is happy at work but dissatisfied with other dimensions of his life, his overall level of happiness or well-being will be lower. Likewise, if an individual has health or relationship issues, it will interfere with his productivity and happiness at work.

Workplaces should work toward promoting a good life for their employees. The workers should be able to attain high levels of subjective well-being and find meaning

in their lives, i.e. achieve eudemonic well-being. This will not only improve the employee-employer relationship but also improve the overall organizational culture.

Conflict of interest

“The authors declare no conflict of interest.”

Author details

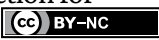
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Values-Flow in Contextual Psychotherapy: The ‘What’, ‘Why’, and ‘How’ of Sustainable Values-Based Behaviour

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Abstract

Flow - enjoyed and fully absorbed engagement in meaningful and contextually bounded activities - is widely underutilised in psychotherapy and mental health settings. Two gold standard therapies, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), while powerful and effective in many ways, would benefit from systematic models that move from initiating positive change to sustaining meaningful change. This chapter introduces ‘Values-Flow’ – an approach aimed at building commitment and sustainable engagement in psychotherapy and values-based behaviour in working adults struggling with sub-optimal functioning. We first introduce Values-Flow and describe how it may benefit psychotherapy skills practice in everyday life. Next, we discuss why Values-Flow is relevant and enhances the practice of ACT and DBT strategies, helping to sustain engagement and creative practice of values-based actions outside of sessions. We then describe the ‘Values-Flow’ framework, which incorporates VIVA (Virtue, Involve, Vital, Accepting) and ARIA (Attend, Reflect, Inform, Act) tools that develop commitment for values-based practice in daily life. We conclude with a case-example of how Values-Flow can build commitment and sustainable engagement in homework completion in psychotherapy.

Keywords: psychotherapy, flow experience, dialectical behaviour therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, values-based behaviour

1. Introduction

More than anything else, individuals entering psychotherapy seek to be happy – commonly reaching out for help after a prolonged period of struggling with thoughts that the bulk of their lives have been wasted with efforts to attain happiness via, among other external means, money, power or prestige. Many eagerly enter the therapist’s room carrying a sense of futility with their long-term struggles and seem ready to face the fundamental truth of psychological treatment – accepting that happiness and a life of value needs to be prepared for, practiced, and depends

largely on how the challenges of daily living are negotiated within themselves [1–4]. Thus, often the first, (though often not explicitly stated) goal of psychotherapy is to develop an attractive redescription of ‘happiness’ [5, 6] as an individually resounding appreciation that happiness is a ‘circuitous path’ [taken] when one is fully involved with every detail of their lives whether good or bad’ ([1], p. 2). The current chapter offers a possible way in which sustainable happiness in psychotherapy can be achieved via the psychoeducation and daily psychotherapy skills practice based on the theory and research of flow experiences – a ‘leading activity-based theory of happiness, often traced back to the philosophical arguments of Aristotle ([7], p. 10), [8, 9].

We outline both processes and mechanisms that, when integrated with standard clinical psychology approaches, have the potential to sustain positive change within a psychosocial context. The focus is on monitoring and enhancing the experiential – especially optimal experiences of enjoyed absorption – during the process of practicing psychotherapy skills and values-based behaviour. We argue that this focus on understanding the use of attention of the individual is one of the most valuable ways of sustaining ‘cognitive flexibility throughout [daily] life and [being] better able to navigate a path of life long learning’ ([10], p. 465). Thus, the attainment of happiness – or the improvement of the quality of experience in values-based activity practice – is in many ways the ‘ultimate goal’ of psychotherapy and the ‘bottom line of existence’ ([7], p. 376).

1.1 ‘Creativity dialectics’ in happiness practice

As will be elaborated further throughout the chapter, we outline a vision and techniques of sustainable happiness practice via the overriding goal of increasing creative patterns of dialectical behaviour among psychotherapy patients [2, 9]. A dialectical world view has been described to patients as an ‘attitude that one can develop...in order to have a direct relationship between one’s thought and one’s life’ ([6], p. 205). Furthermore, the aim is to help patients build a ‘psychological complexity...in the person that enable him or her to continually negotiate, and renegotiate, an optimally rewarding self-environment fit’ ([9], p. 482). Rooted in the ancient philosophies of Aristotle’s ‘golden mean’ [11] and Hadot’s and Foucault’s ‘spiritual exercises and the [creative] transformation of the self by the self, but also entails a more general configuration of power, knowledge and the techniques of the self’ ([6], p. 207).

We conceive of the term *creativity dialectics* as dialectical behaviours that ‘actually manifest by real [and eminent] person’s...who were successful on a cultural stage... [and are] modelling optimal developmental trajectories’ ([10], p. 484). The role of the therapist in this sense is arguably to help the patient redescribe, via optimal experiences, what it means to be happy, creative, and valuable. Via what Hatch [5] suggests is a pragmatic/hermeneutic process of redescription of happiness, the therapist must include active-interactive demonstrations and actions exemplifying creativity dialectics in the challenges of everyday life, rather than simply psychoeducation of what needs to be happier. A noteworthy point here is that the role of the therapist is to actively re-define terms like ‘self-care’, which has been widely overused and is frequently meaningless (if not shame inducing) [2], via frequent and interesting discussions of the value of virtuous practice and the ancient lineage and dialectical philosophies of the self-care practice [1, 2, 6]. In doing so, the practice of sustaining happiness, creativity, and values-based behaviour becomes a ‘way of being of individuals and realize the whole modification of their whole personality’ ([6], p. 207).

1.2 Values-flow in practicing a happy, creative, and valuable daily life

Values-Flow refers to the ‘what’, ‘why’, and the ‘how’ of sustainable values-based behaviour. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the originator of Flow [1] and a co-founder of the popular field of positive psychology [8, 12] is said to have taken a handful of his graduate students to a ranch where they stood together in the open landscape watching Mihaly’s dog, Cedric, engrossed in a game of fetch with his owner. Several minutes later, Mihaly announced to the group, ‘See even Cedric understands Flow’s balance of challenge and skill’ ([13], p. 7). The ongoing interaction in the challenges of daily life in ways which are skilful, enjoyable, and build one’s valued-behaviour, exemplified in Cedric and Mihaly’s symbiosis, is a fundamental tenant of Values-Flow - living a life of value in sustainable and creative ways.

Having passed away at the age of 87 in October 2021, Mihaly left a legacy of nearly a half century of research and collaboration on diverse topics related to emerging positive psychological science [8], including but not limited to creative personhood [10, 14], vital engagement [14, 15] and flow experiences [1, 7–10]. Also called optimal experience, Flow provides an experiential perspective on human development that represents a ‘coordinated operation of stabilizing and broadening uses of attention’ and is ‘genetically based and transcultural’ ([10], p. 469). Through the daily practice of self-regulation of these cognitive and affective capabilities, individuals are able to achieve vital engagement, which is ‘an absorbing and meaningful relationship between self and the world, [which] can be found any sphere of life’ ([10], p. 5). Through the ‘ability to select, or help others select, a course of action that is optimal for survival and [psychological] growth in insight in regard to relevant life processes’ ([15], p. 491), the individual establishes a creative way of routinely manage the challenges of daily life. In this chapter we argue that central to not only psychotherapy, but also to everyday functioning are skills that identify, sustain, and creatively develop values-behaviours in daily life.

In 1990, Csikszentmihalyi argued that; “The tools that make flow possible are common property, and [should be] knowledge recorded in books available to schools and libraries” ([1], p. 127). Yet despite his vast academic achievements, it seems that Mihaly wondered why his work had not, through his graduate students, achieved more prominence in the lives of everyday people [13]. Through the daily absorbed attention and joyful application of cultural information [16, 17], flow experiences represent primarily optimal attentional states that contribute to happiness and a life well-lived [1, 7, 8, 10]. In the realm of psychotherapy, evidence suggests that the use of flow in clinical and psychotherapy settings can assist in symptom reduction and rehabilitation as well as enhancing wellbeing and a life of value [18]. With the exception of Riva et al. (2014), who discussed how flow concepts could assist in psychodynamic therapy approaches, the flow concept has not been effectively translated into everyday lives of working adults, and even less has been incorporated into typical contextual cognitive behavioural therapies including Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT; 2) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; 3, 4).

We suggest that traditional attempts to apply flow among working adults, which we call Flow 1.0, have prescribed the benefits of optimal transmission of cultural information for everyday survival and the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of structuring optimal attention and experience [10]. This information remains highly valid, particularly as contemporary society makes it harder to focus attention in daily life. In many ways, Flow 1.0 efforts have been static and rigid translations of Flow theory, lacking the transforming impact for typical working adults – especially individuals of various

socio-economic and cultural backgrounds seeking the assistance of psychotherapy tools. That is, applications of flow have focused on the prominence of theoretical translations rather than using practice-based evidence frameworks from established psychotherapy traditions. Similarly, DBT, as a domain with a strong evidence base and applied focus, has faced similar ‘information transfer’ challenges [2]. We hence argue that ACT and DBT approaches are best positioned to bring flow to life to the everyday person seeking psychological assistance, with or without psychological dysfunction.

The Values-Flow approach represents the integration of clinical psychology practices – as specified by acceptance and mindfulness approaches [2–4] – with flow and creativity theory [1, 10, 16, 17]. In this chapter, we propose the flow tools that may encourage flexible and values-based application in clinical psychology skills, especially values-based behaviour practices during psychotherapy. Just like any service that is provided to the general public, therapists often struggle to engage the ‘full self’ of the (working) adult attending psychotherapy, especially outside of therapeutic sessions. The aim of the Values-Flow approach is to focus on sustainable engagement and creativity within the process of psychotherapy skills practice, especially as it relates to between session practices [2, 10]. Moreover, when the individual presents with clinical level symptoms, moments of Values-Flow, which we discuss below, may expand on what is meaningfully and practically possible in terms of psychotherapy skills application. We hence introduce Flow 2.0, which is an attempt to push past the generic prescriptions of what and how of the flow zone by bridging what’s known with sustainably applicable in terms of flow theory amidst daily challenges.

2. The importance of values-flow

The Values-Flow approach integrates flow and creativity theory to expand the reach of standard contextual psychotherapy skills. Recent studies show that up to 50% of therapy clients do not show clinically significant change. One possible reason is that less than 1 in 4 therapists are setting homework in systemic ways [19] – failing to set the conditions for sustainable engagement and creativity in everyday homework practice [20]. Ignjatovic, Kern, and Oades [21, 22] investigated a population sample of Australian teachers – an occupation with high levels of stress nationally and internationally – to investigate the dynamics of sustainable engagement over months and years. Instead of examining the mechanics of pathology and weakness, the objective was to understand the mechanics of sustainable flow experiences in challenging settings. Despite being a profession of great stress, there were seemingly contradictory findings that flow in educational personnel occurred at a rate of 3 times the general population of working adults [23]. Additionally, Ignjatovic et al. [21] showed that school staff were periodically using personal strengths to experience flow in their work, even amidst the routine challenges of everyday life. Ignjatovic et al. [22] subsequently provided evidence of a processes of vital engagement in working adults over a three-year period, showing that sustainable engagement in values-based behaviour of character strengths use, daily vitality, and acceptance. These works offer promising research foundations to Values-flow- or sustainable engagement and creativity in values-based skills practice inside and outside of psychotherapy, which we build upon in this chapter.

Working adults comprise one of the most important subsection of every society. Even as working adults have a significant impact on economic and socio-cultural aspects, they are increasingly exhibiting frequent, intense, and symptoms of

depression [24] insomnia [25] and post-traumatic stress [26], among other psychiatric conditions. Third wave psychotherapies, including DBT [2] and ACT [3, 4], are among the evidence-based treatment for both ill-health and psychological symptoms management as well as developing a life of value. However, despite the effectiveness of these psychological treatments, Hayes suggested that when it comes to commitment-based aspects of ACT ‘the hard work [has been] elsewhere’ ([3], p. 310). Hayes further suggested that a more detailed functional structure is needed to fill the ‘content vacuum’ in bringing values work into the realm of sustainable behaviour change ([3], p. 311). In treating therapy interfering behaviours (especially lack of commitment to therapy skills practice), Linehan argued that ‘behaviour therapists have given ‘little empirical attention to the treatment of behaviours that interfere with therapy’ ([2], p. 21). Currently, the ‘response functions’ within daily challenges and stressors of executing the skills of psychotherapy are not well specified and are left up to ‘the creativity of therapist and the spontaneous comments [and/or actions] of the client’ ([3], p. 311), arguably perpetuating low rates of continued practice of skills learned early in psychotherapy [19, 20].

If it is indeed the case that creativity and flexibility is required within psychotherapy execution, then it makes sense to establish clear components for ‘creative response functions’ [3, 10] that can be ‘extracted, from the sociocultural milieu’ ([27], p. 47) surrounding the patient, therapist, and the psychotherapy process. To fuel human development, this chapter aims to further specify the patterns of symbolic interactions that allow a person to use cultural models for building a creative personal history [16, 17, 27]. We introduce the Values-Flow approach as the soil from which the goals and skills-based therapy practice grows and rises from. Much like fertile soil from which all living things must grow, Values-based behaviours –a commitment to ‘live in accordance with what they care most deeply about’ ([28], p. 245) – are what connect everything together and through which all else flows out from.

Moreover, the specific mechanisms and processes underpinning the optimal development of values over time are currently not well understood [29, 30]. We argue that the studies by Ignjatovic et al. [21, 22] on flow and vital engagement provide promising frameworks for establishing the mechanisms and processes of the Values-Flow approach in psychotherapy with working adults. Because the focus is on establishing the structural and developmental conditions of creative and adaptive behaviour [10], Values-Flow in psychotherapy may guide both therapist and clients in the sustainable engagement in psychotherapy and homework practice [2, 4].

To illustrate the mechanisms and processes of Values-flow in vitally engaging psychotherapy skills practice, we first contextualise our discussion within the concepts self-regulation, creativity dialectics, the VIVA (Vital, Involve, Virtue, Accepting, VIVA) or the ARIA (Attending, Reflecting, Informing and Actualising) models, before turning to how these processes might guide sustainable engagement in psychotherapy treatment.

2.1 Working adults’optimal development: the potential of self-regulation

A major premise of both DBT and ACT is that gaps in skills related to emotional and cognitive regulation systems are key contributors to the dysfunctional behaviours and interactions that occur within social and cultural experiences. For instance, ‘invalidating environments’ in childhood fail to teach skills related to label and regulating arousal, tolerating emotional distress, and trusting emotional responses as reflections of valid interpretations of everyday events ([12], p. 42), which lead to

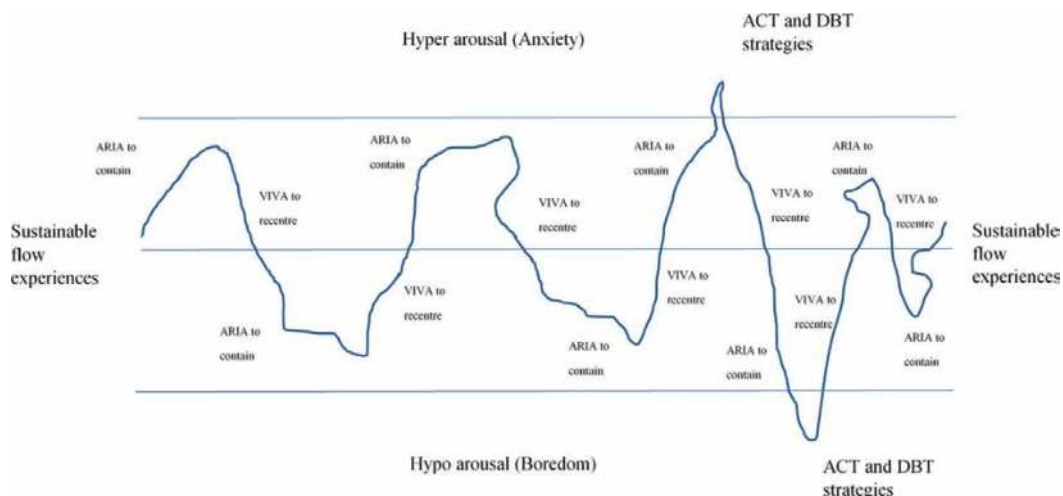


Figure 1.
The creativity window.

ongoing dysfunction in adulthood [6]. Biosocial theories suggest that personality, human development, and self-regulation of one’s experience have important roles to play in healthy development. Similarly, Rathunde and Csikszentmihaly argued that flow theory is a ‘development [that] unfolds in time and is emergent phenomena... unfolding and provides a holistic level of integration between biology, person, and the cultural environment’ ([6], p. 471). Unlike both Hayes’ [11] and Linehan’s [12] perspectives, Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde focus on the descriptions of how competent and highly creative persons ‘continually negotiate, and renegotiate, an optimally re-rewarding self-environment fit’ ([6], p. 482). The Values-Flow approach integrates these perspectives and provides an applied approach to ongoing self-regulation in optimal and sustainable ways, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 illustrates that the variability of emotional regulation in daily practice of creative functioning using Values-Flow skills – specifically focussing on the sustainable flow experience centre. According to the creativity window, the capacity to sustain flow experiences results from an ‘active-interactive’ participation with challenging daily contexts via the ‘negotiating a better fit or synchrony of self with environment’ ([10], p. 481). In doing so the individual is said to possess the affective, cognitive, and behavioural skills to observe, describe, and participate in creative ways even during periods of higher (hyperarousal) or lower (hypoarousal) arousal. The ARIA skills (discussed below) are ‘containers’ of the variations of hyper or hypo arousal during efforts to sustain creative skills practice. However, the VIVA skills (discussed below) act as the re-entering process to values-based behaviour in sustainable ways.

2.2 Creativity dialectics practice in working adults

Csikszentmihalyi suggested that creativity occurs ‘when a person makes a change in a domain, a change that will be transmitted through time’ ([17], p. 115). Whilst creativity is often viewed as an individual trait, it is the interactions of people with their culture and social groups – indicating the biopsychosocial nature of ongoing flow experiences. From the Creativity in Later Life study of eminent creators and innovators [16, 17], the daily practice of finding flow experiences was a recurrent theme. Although Csikszentmihalyi [16] cautioned that achieving creativity exhibited

by notable examples required extended periods of time and great access to the rules of extant domains, he nonetheless provided suggestions on how creativity processes could be encouraged in everyday people seeking to lead a more creative life.

In this chapter, we term 'creativity dialectics' to denote the 'polarities that reveal the capacity for finding optimal experiences through a process of differentiation and integration' ([10], p. 484). Sustainable engagement in creative practice involves several components. As illustrated in **Figure 2**, creative dialectics first require the ability to either 1) respond to 'new challenges with skills building rather than a retreat to familiar methods that alleviate anxiety without transforming the problem that it creates', or 2) responds to the conditions of monotonous ease and comfort by finding challenge that focuses attention in a transformative direction ([10], p. 473). Secondly, as per Linehan, there is a focus on the dialectics associating with human functioning – 'or a reconciliation of opposites and continual process of synthesis' ([2], p. 19). Thirdly, infusing contextual psychotherapy with a focus on the creative developmental histories that are part of the individuals discovered life themes and flow activity [27] of flow activity. Of note is Csikszentmihalyi's clear delineation between flow experiences – or forms of enjoyable experiences of immersion – and the function of flow activity – or 'sequences of action that make it easy for people to achieve optimal experiences' ([7], p. 31).

Figure 2 illustrates the eight polarities of sustained flow activity and experience, or the application of the mechanisms and processes of Values-Flow approach to psychotherapy – i.e., the ARIA and VIVA skills. We argue that the most fundamental dialectic is the necessity of accepting the challenges just as they are within the context of trying to change them with the developing skills [10] – namely the active balance of skill building and challenge finding (and accepting). This is similar to Linehan's central dialectic of acceptance and change which is the 'moment-to-moment changes in the use of supportive acceptance versus confrontation and chance strategies'

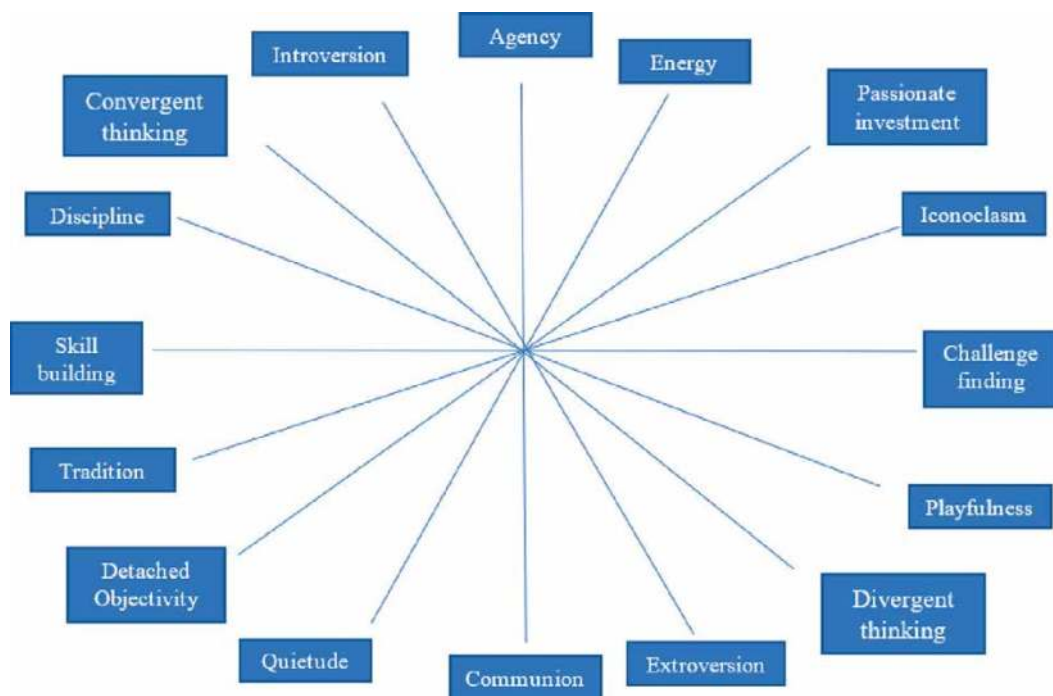


Figure 2.
Creativity dialectics.

([2], p. 19). The term 'creativity dialectics' suggests the ability to 'instigate development by flexibly working at the edges of order and novelty, without letting one or the other dominate' ([10], p. 482). In other words, creativity dialectics help to educate psychotherapy clients of the pathways to attaining optimal self-regulation, and thereby more memorable moments of happiness, in the process of balancing the periods of both order and novelty in their daily lives.

We shall briefly review the dialectical dimensions of 'psychological complexity' as they provide a basis for further elaboration of the Values Flow approach to psychotherapy.

- Agency versus Communion – the juxtaposition between competing 'drives toward independence and interdependence' – in the domain of interpersonal domain, which has been linked to optimal developmental outcomes and competent performance because they help to creativity 'negotiate the optimal experience through structure changing and building' ([10], p. 485).
- Passionate investment versus Detached objectivity – this dimension juxtaposes the tension between 'intense interest...intrigue...kind of rush of affect' with 'shaping...critiquing [and] detaching' from one's productive efforts. The fitting of initially 'immense curiosity that you begin to shape over time' ([10], p. 486).
- Divergent versus Convergent thinking – the ability to creatively think is said to be founded on the process of bringing synergy to different information occurs from intellectual problem solving together with problem finding; where cognitive fluency and the capacity to make unusual association are exhibited ([10], p. 486).
- Playfulness versus Discipline – this dimension characterises the ability to 'at the same time be irresponsible and responsible', a process of sustaining engagement during the 'exciting' parts of creativity and when the individual is intentional and considering practical ways to bring the 'wonderfully wild ideas' to life ([10], p. 487).
- Extraversion versus introversion – a dialectic that requires the skills of 'radical acceptance' ([2], p. 148) of the changing preferences, depending on the context, of being either 'at the centre of action or at a spot along the periphery' ([10], p. 488). This dialectical process between contact and solitude is central to maintaining the flexibility of behaviour to achieve as self-environment fit.
- Energy versus Quietude – this dialectic characterises the commitment and concentration of harmoniously balancing the physical needs of eminently creative individuals. Knowing and practicing an implicit 'rhythm [s] of activity and idleness', ([10], p. 489) optimally balancing rest in the form of sleep with exercise, was crucial on their journey of life-long discovery and invention.
- Iconoclastic versus traditional – this dialectic characterises the socio-cultural milieu that creative processes are continually revitalised and sustained. Creative persons have been reportedly as acutely respectful of important traditions in their domain of work, and that they 'stand on the shoulders of giants'. However, at the same time they are also, in many ways in honour of the hard work of their predecessors, have sought to 'blaze new trails, and find interesting, innovative, and often unpredictable ways of moving forward ([10], p. 489).

3. The values-flow approach: the what and how of sustainable and creative engagement in psychotherapy

As discussed above, the Values-Flow approach, aligned with the objectives of Flow 2.0, is to develop applied and sustainable engagement models of change informed by systems theory approaches [2, 30] - focusing on ‘WHAT doing’ and ‘HOW doing’, versus what and how to DO. Moreover, the methodology of the ‘what doing’ doing and ‘how doing’ modelled on Linehan’s [2] approach to teaching mindful skills practice. A key facet of this applied approach to skills practice in psychotherapy is the continuous resolution of dialectical dilemmas inherent in daily life – the ceaseless harmonising of the challenges present in the context and skills available in the process of ‘daily doing’ that is creative and sustainable.

There are two core skill sets in Values-Flow that are equally shared within both the mindfulness and acceptance traditions of ACT and DBT and the Flow of Consciousness in clinical contexts [18]; 1) *Awareness, Focus and Action*, which are part of the ARIA skills [1, 10] and; 2) *Acceptance, Willingness, and Virtue*, as part of VIVA [1, 22]. We shall now review both the ARIA and VIVA skills in more detail – including the four ‘what doing’ skills (Attending, Reflecting, Informing, Acting; ARIA) and four ‘how doing’ skills (pursuing a life of virtue, being routinely involved in Flow activities, experiencing a sense of vital and accepting purpose; VIVA). Of note, these skills are listed on the Values-Flow Cards (see **Appendix 1**), which psychotherapy clients can complete and review in each session.

3.1 Awareness and focus

The first set of skills to consider are awareness and focus, which are part of the ARIA skills, and are fundamental to both routine self-care and happiness practice [2]. These initial skills begin with being observant and descriptive of the dynamic nature of daily life, the routine presence and creative opportunities in routine situational contradictions, and the attentional and psychological skills needed to bring harmony of challenges and skills in daily situations of life. For example, this could involve observing the rhythm of moment-to-moment events during parent-child interactions, with the benefits of observing affective challenges of young children’s emotional expression through the lens of opportunities to learn (and model) emotional processing.

These first set of skills follow the acceptance and mindfulness traditions [2–4], are the ‘what doing’ skills of Values-Flow, and are covered at the outset of contextual psychotherapy. They include developing the capacity to attend to, and be aware of, internal and external challenges by observing and describing them objectively, rather than subjective descriptions of the experience. That is, the Values-Flow approach focuses on the nexus between awareness of daily events and challenges and how to direct one’s focus toward responding in structured ways – i.e. using one’s ARIA skills. The individual is aiming to structure in adaptive and values-based ways in response to routine life challenges associated with values-based behaviours. Similar to values work in ACT, a core focus of Values-Flow is on the person’s sense of meaning and purpose in their daily lives. However, Values Flow approach goes a step beyond by creating a clear structure to remain committed to values-based behaviours in daily life in ways that are creative, and contribute to happiness.

The awareness skills are not just on external challenges, such as busy working schedule or difficulties managing parenting responsibilities, but also the internal

anxieties, boredom, and apathy that often occur in daily lives of psychotherapy clients. In short, most clients know that values-behaviour and psychotherapy homework practice is what they should do, but they often fail to follow through. Values-Flow supports them in the process of putting things into play in their everyday life. Being able to contain one's attentional and emotional experiences when they are distracted by previously learned unhelpful patterns of daily functioning is necessary when a new behaviour is being learned. For example, a working adult with severe anxiety may need to commit the ARIA acronym to their memory and their initial goal being only to be able to recall the acronym, without necessarily being able to apply it, in less challenging life situations. According to Values-Flow the first and foremost challenge in daily life of many clients is the ability to remember to use the skills learned in psychotherapy, and hence that is the primary goal of initial phases of Values-Flow. The reason for practicing Values-flow is recurrently highlighted and demonstrated in psychotherapy sessions and that it is possible to 'feel [and discover anew] a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory of what life should look like' ([1], p. 3), [27].

As suggested in **Figure 1**, the establishment of a 'ARIA container' is very similar to DBT and ACT in that when exposed to distressing events, people experience challenging situations, emotions, and information in observant and descriptive ways, rather than actively avoiding or attempting to suppress these experiences. This type of avoidant behaviour, whilst understandable, is the behaviour is targeted by the Values-Flow approach. Utilising the optimal transmission methods inherent in flow theory [9], the focus on experiencing challenges as they are in balanced by a focus on 'groove and rhythm' ([5], p. 80) inherent in previous Values-Flow experiences and life themes.

The Informing and Acting skills comprise the third and fourth 'what doing' skills – focusing on reframing daily challenging events from the 'creativity dialectics' lens and applying these in real time. Firstly, the process of apply verbal labels to current challenges, both internal and external, is essential for self-regulation and communicating with others [2]. Acknowledging and formulating the seemingly contradictory feelings and events clearly are the key initial actions that one takes in daily life in response to challenges they encounter. Secondly, the ability to reconnect with the memories and skills related to previous Value Flow themes in times of challenge can assist in fuelling the willingness to practice negotiating the relevant challenge the individual is facing. Both ACT and DBT help clients to 'observe and describe' challenging events, however provide inadequate structural detail in how to 'participate in [daily challenges] without self-consciousness' ([2], p. 284). For instance, by connecting to areas of current and past discovered life themes [27], the individual has a real-life experience to occasions when, despite the challenges they faced, they were able to exhibit adaptive problem solving, behaviours and flow experiences.

By merging of the Attending and Reflecting with Informing and Acting in the process of balancing the internal challenges of difficult emotions implies a willing participation with daily challenges – or engaging completely in the activities of the current moment, without separating oneself from ongoing events ([2], p. 148). In Values-Flow the process of values-based action is flexible and spontaneous, and the individual is responding to the challenges and demands of the task with awareness, the absence of self-consciousness, and with their full attention on the present challenges as they are. That is, the individual that can routinely apply the ARIA skills are setting the moment-to-moment structure for 'creativity dialectics' associated with the sustainable of values-based behaviour practice in daily life.

3.2 Core VIVA skills

The next four skills have to do with the ‘What Doing’ in the Values-Flow approach – expanding the creativity dialectics and providing a compass for where to take ARIA skills over extended periods of time. They include pursuing a life of virtue (Virtue), being routinely involved in Flow activities (Involve), experiencing a sense of vital (Vital) and accepting (Accepting) purpose over the months and years of their lives.

The first VIVA, or ‘what doing,’ skill is being *Virtuous*. This is a capacity to be true to, and take care of, oneself [6] and to balance the challenges of daily situation and the strengths that are employed. The routine use of character strengths is based on the ‘pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energizing to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance’ ([11], p. 9). Using the Values-Flow approach may enable the process of harnessing one’s strengths in sustainable and creative ways, especially in challenging daily situations – a practice with rooted in age-old philosophical and ethical foundations [1, 2, 6]. Applying the skills learned in psychotherapy in routine challenges, especially in virtuously and with dialectical behaviours managing the ‘empty spaces’ of organising oneself [5] – putting virtues skills into play in daily life is the fundamental premise of Values-Flow.

The second VIVA, or ‘what doing,’ is the *Involve* skill. Within Values-Flow, this involves the appreciation and practice of flow activity – a process which teaches routes of recurrent flow experiences. This is central to the Value-Flow approach, and the objective of Flow 2.0 in calling for more research and practice in applied mechanism of flow experiences. In the process of not only getting and understanding of flow experiences and pathways to their increased occurrence, it is just as important to have a ‘groove and feel’ of what they are. This requires an in-depth appreciation of the ‘creativity dialectics’ managing the process of building their therapy skills whilst also finding novel and interesting ways of challenging and refining them. From a Values-Flow perspective, focusing on enjoying the process of daily practice is what DBT calls ‘playing the game’ or ‘doing what works’ ([2], p. 147). In the process of ‘using skillful means’, the individual learns to enjoy being both responsible and irresponsible, depending on the context. It is indeed a known fact that eminently creative individuals routinely engage in ‘serious play’ ([10], p. 491). In the process of ‘letting go’ of the need to always be responsible, one can allow themselves to have opportunities for divergent mindsets.

The third VIVA, or ‘what doing’ skill, is the Vital skill. Values-Flow teaches the importance of taking care of one’s physical and mental energy levels – ensuring that psychic energy levels stay at optimal levels over time. The notation of feeling energised by one’s work requires that the individual understand that sustainable energy can only occur in the context of regular quietude. In order to sustain flow activity in ones’ life in Values-Flow ways, the individual needs to sustain a sense of feeling energised by one’s daily tasks. In order to sustain frequent flow experiences, one needs to ensure regular self-care practice, especially good sleep routines, and periods of rest and recharge throughout one’s day.

In the Values-Flow approach, there is fundamental belief that working tirelessly for long hours in the context of enjoyment and meaning are possible, but only with equally valued times of rest and recharge. In seemingly contradictory ways, one must learn to harmoniously balance activity and rest – doing objective work in beautiful and inspirational settings and intense periods of work with naps, walks, bike rides, gardening, chopping wood’ ([10], p. 489).

The fourth VIVA, or what doing skill is the Accepting skill. The ‘Values-Flow approach suggests that in the process of emotion modulation skills are necessary

during the process of optimal self-environment fit in daily lives in most adults' lives. When engaged in intense and meaningful work experiences, individuals show they can engage in their work tirelessly for long hours and enjoyed their profession for the opportunities for optimal experience over the status and financial benefit it provides [1, 7–10]. When asked, apart from spending time with family, the tasks work associated with flow experiences are rated as the happiest times in their lives [23]. Developing skills to be at once serious and playful [10] in daily life, resulting in subjective happiness arising from putting psychotherapy skills into practice, largely based on an ongoing sense of acceptance and a feeling that one is being true to one's values. In many ways psychotherapy skills practice takes on a 'spiritual' dimension and becomes an ethical transformation of the self ([5], p. 207)).

4. The values-flow approach to homework completion

To bring this to life, we consider a case example. A client attends psychotherapy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis, having had previous experiences of completing acceptance and mindfulness therapies. However, whilst their more intense psychiatric symptoms have largely been stabilised, their difficulties have continued. One way of conceptualising the problems is that the patient may know 'what to do' but experiences challenges getting to the root of what is valuable in their life and the how of doing values work? Despite knowing the various DBT or ACT skills like how to defuse from their thoughts, how to increase physical activation and skilful participation, and engaging in self-care, the key aspects of vital engagement have not been activated. As alluded to before, the soil in which all of their mindfulness and acceptance are embedded is Values-Flow – within which all psychotherapy skills are planted in and flow out to every other part therapy skills and daily challenges. What is needed is needed is both ARIA and VIVA skills that comprise the Values-Flow approach that will provide the 'why, 'what' and 'how' of sustainable engagement in values-based behaviour on a daily basis.

The Values-Flow approach is the key foundation to sustainable flow experiences – the soil – where all the nutrients and everything connects all living aspects together in valuable ways. That is, this approach connects all psychological skills development from DBT and ACT with the creative expression and use of these skills in daily life. We shall now go through the 3 facets the Values Flow approach – the why doing, how doing, and what doing – of our PTSD client. We also note the use of the Values-Flow Card (see **Appendix 1**) which facilitates structured learning, review and practice of ARIA and VIVA skills.

4.1 'Why doing' homework discussion

At the outset of psychotherapy, the value of practice outside of session and homework of skills covered in psychotherapy time should be discussed. The Values-Flow approach to practice is discussed as a process that should be immersive, and have a structure related to human creativity and enjoyment. The Values-Flow Card should be introduced as something that the therapist and client spend time at the start and end of each session discussing and reviewing; highlighting that practice is both valuable in itself and that Values-Flow comes from practice. Incorporating a balance of both playfulness and discipline to homework review and discussion between therapist and clients is a crucial aspect of the Values-Flow approach.

The definition of the terms of such as life theme discovery and character strengths use within Virtue section of VIVA are introduced and have specific practice activities which are specified (e.g., for Character strengths use, the first activity is for the individual to complete the free online Character strengths questionnaire, and to examine the challenges and opportunities related to using them in their daily life throughout the week). Being clear about the importance of homework completion and outside of session practice is further established by questions and troubleshooting considerations such as: Do you have any questions about the homework?; Can you see any barriers to that?; How will your work requirements impact your ability to complete the homework practice?; How will you make time for homework when your kids need's often come first?; Can we pre-empt some of these situations prior to our session ending today?

Some key considerations about how to shape the review and homework completion can be undertaken as follows. At the outset of every session, return to the Values-Flow Card and the review of which is done with an interested and encouraging demeanour from the therapist. If the client attempts to speak about other things other than homework completion, this can be briefly acknowledged as something that would be given ample attention, but then redirect the conversation to the priority of 'how did you go with your Values-Flow card, what worked, and what didn't? The therapists approach is to celebrate what was completed, even if this is incomplete or if the homework was only thought about. At the same time, their focus is on shaping skills to overcome the barriers that are observed. Statements such as 'this is wonderful that you started, so proud of you completing that part of the Values-Flow card' are balanced by the shaping and focusing behavior towards desired completion of goals that wasn't achieved. The tasks that were not completed are worked on the Values-Flow card are worked through with trouble shooting – statements like 'something happened to get in the way, I'm really curious, I'm really interested, and this is not a criticism, but I am really wondering what things got the way'.

There are a diverse challenges which clients encounter relating to homework completion. For instance, the client may have attempted the exercise set for them once and they did not find any enjoyment in doing it. In that case we take an accepting approach and inquire, 'ok how did you do it exactly, what was hard, what was getting in the way'? Another frequent consideration from the therapist is that clients often exhibit magical thinking relating to value of homework exercise, perceiving that the exercises set for them would make an immediate and extraordinary difference in their lives. The primary message to the therapist is the need to spend time clarifying the challenges related to completing the Values-Flow Card and specifying a support structure and skill set to matching these challenges.

4.2 In-session modelling of overcoming challenges to homework completion

What and how attention focused on the completion of the Values-Flow card should be discussed on a weekly basis in psychotherapy sessions. Apart from shaping behaviour, the process of intense focus and creativity of troubleshooting the challenges of practice signals to patients the value of to pay attention of what they did not do. As suggested above, what is completed is celebrated at one instance and in another should include questions like 'something got you undone here, something got in the way, what was it, let's have a look together' are put forward to the client. There should be review of what is not done is done with interest and compassion. Be mindful of body language, facial expression and tone of voice to indicate 'how wonderful it was they completed their homework and how happy you are' whilst also directing the focus toward 'what happened in what did not get

done, something did not happen here and I'm very, very curious, I'm very interested to know what was there?" You may also offer common examples for why homework does not get completed such as: children were crying; there was no money and they had to work extra shifts; the person felt a bit despondent; by the end of the week they got very tired and felt like everything was too much; or the person overused substances.

In Values-Flow the therapist looks at the challenges associated with homework and practice with an attitude and position of curiosity and interest rather than 'this was good and this was bad'. Black and white thinking is not going to encourage people to learn the value of homework completion, let alone help them enjoy balancing challenges with their skills. Rather, by acknowledging the challenges and opportunities that are there, it can guide the client toward a better way of being that is more attuned to their values and best interests.

It is absolutely crucial to work with the parts of the homework that is not done without the view of not furthering their past themes of being punished or shamed. Therapists need to recognise that it is very easy to induce a shame response within client. The aim of Values-Flow is to not engage in criticism that they got from school, parents, or coaches. The process of reviewing Values-Flow homework is a modelling of Accepting skills that are part of VIVA; bringing in an appreciation that life is full of barriers that get in the way of our best intentions.

Sometimes the therapist must practice acceptance skills in session by working on finding out if there was an intention to do the homework that wasn't completed. Practicing Acceptance skills in session provide essential feedback about whether the person 'thought about doing the homework' and/or 'did you feel that it was important?' Understanding the value-system underpinning both intention to, and the behaviour of, homework completion is crucial to the Values-Flow approach. It is through this process that the therapist can understand the transmission of information related to 'the value of doing homework in my daily life'.

Over time, the aim is to develop a collaboration between therapist and client around what is exactly being requested from them in the Value-Flow Card, the 'why are they doing it' and the 'how of accepting of challenges associated with using skills in daily life. As they get become increasingly immersed and understand Values-Flow, there's a deeper understanding of 'What Doing' and 'How doing' of homework.

Simply assigning homework often does not translate into a person's life, primarily because the usual patterns of behaviour take over and carry on life until the next appointment. The use of the Values-Flow Card within sessions models to the client what 'radical acceptance' [12] looks like in relation to daily challenges; radically accepting both the challenges that are liked and manageable and those that are not liked. The key lesson is that accepting 'liking and disliking' as part of Values-Flow is a way to better manage daily challenges and taking them on with an open heart, which ultimately guide the client toward healing and a better way of life.

5. Conclusion: The 'what' of values-flow: how to take care of yourself

The process of accumulating positive experience is like collecting coins over time. The Values-Flow approach aims at helping that process of accumulation by keeping the individual within the creative window as often as possible in daily life. That means that when something difficult happens there is a cushion of accumulated good experiences. These are important because they help us to better tolerate periods in daily life and when energy and enthusiasm become depleted by challenging situation that 'get under our

skin’. Hence, the Values-Flow approach is about working on accumulation of positive experiences and paying intense attention to ‘good stuff in life’. This might be having a playfulness demeanour that mirrors children playing and being funny. It could be expending the physical energy playing ball in a playful and lighthearted way. It could be being mindful and intensely interested in the clouds in the sky for instance. Or any other number of options of building heartfelt positivity into everyday life [31].

At its core, the collecting positive experiences in Values-Flow is an act of self-care [32]. Practicing collecting the good in your life and being absorbed in these things is crucial to that process – rather than always being too busy solving the challenges all the time. Coming to appreciate that solving the problems of daily life are done more effectively after time and energy is invested collecting positive experiences is fundamental to Values-Flow approach. The challenges that individuals are faced with in daily life are important. However, collecting positive experiences, or moments of happiness, before these challenges are addressed is not running away from them, but rather making space to taking care of oneself and creating a cushion from the hardships associated with them.

Appendix 1

A. Value flow card

Values-Flow Card Name: _____ | Date: _____

Please circle the days on which you practiced each Values-Flow Skill

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Virtue skills							
1. Life theme	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2. Character use	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Involve Skills							
3. A ttending	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
4. R eflecting	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5. I nforming	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6. A cting	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Vital skills							
7. Serious Play	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8. Workability	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Accept Skills							
9. Optimal relating	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
10. Optimal regulation	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Please describe how Values-Flow skills were put to play in your daily life on personal, social, and/or cultural level:

Individual Values- Flow skills notes: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Social Values-Flow skills notes: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Cultural Values-Flow skills notes: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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Values-Flow Card

Name:

Date:

Please briefly describe and rate the process of practicing various aspects of the Values-Flow Skills in your daily life

	VIRTUE	INVOLVE	VITAL	ACCEPT	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES	Skills Practice Rating*
Mon							
Tues							
Wed							
Thurs							
Friday							
Sat							
Sun							

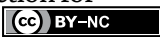
0 = Value-Flow skills not thought about or practiced	3 = Values-Flow Skills thought about, practice attempted, and focus was labored but also caring
1 = Value-Flow Skills thought about, practice thought about but not attempted	4 = Values-Flow Skills thought about, attempted, and experienced caring focus
2 = Values -Flow Skills thought about, practice attempted but felt labored	5 = Values-Flow Skills thought about, attempted, and focus was in flow (experienced flows)

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Chapter 7

Focusing on Gratitude: Implications for Mental Health

Mark S. Rye, Kristen R. Schiavo and Anna Tsaligopoulou

Abstract

This chapter examines positive psychology theories and research findings on how gratitude contributes to happiness and well-being. Two theories are discussed that provide insight into why gratitude enhances well-being (i.e., Broaden-and-Build Theory; Find, Remind, and Bind Theory). Empirical findings are reviewed showing that gratitude relates to lower levels of psychological distress, higher levels of psychological well-being, and better physical health. Benefits of writing-based gratitude interventions such as maintaining gratitude journals and writing gratitude letters are described. Studies showing promising benefits of gratitude across several situations are also addressed (i.e., the workplace, romantic relationships, and aging). Finally, suggestions for enhancing gratitude in one's life are provided along with recommendations for future research.

Keywords: gratitude, happiness, well-being, positive psychology, intervention

1. Introduction

Positive psychology examines how human virtues and strengths enable individuals, groups, and organizations to thrive [1, 2]. Research in positive psychology has provided insight into the relationship between virtues and well-being, identified mechanisms that explain these relationships, and revealed how virtue-based interventions can enhance well-being. An example of a virtue that contributes uniquely to happiness and well-being is gratitude. Gratitude has been extolled as a virtue for thousands of years by philosophers and major world religions. However, it is only within the last two decades that psychologists have made a concerted effort to examine gratitude through the lens of science.

Gratitude is both an emotion and a perspective toward life [3]. In order to experience gratitude, one must recognize blessings or benefits that enhance one's life and conclude that the source comes, at least in part, from outside of oneself [4]. The perceived intention behind the gift is an important factor in determining whether gratitude is experienced [5]. Gratitude is more likely to occur when a gift is perceived as having been granted freely and with benevolent intentions [5]. In contrast, gratitude is less likely to occur if a gift is viewed as an attempt to manipulate or to create a feeling of indebtedness. Gratitude is also unlikely to be experienced when people have high levels of narcissism and/or cynicism [6].

Importantly, gratitude does not involve denial of painful experiences [7]. Simply telling someone who is suffering a painful injury or loss that they should be grateful

can be perceived as insensitive and invalidating. Ignoring pain or pretending it does not exist is not likely to be an effective coping strategy. On the other hand, focusing exclusively on one's suffering, without considering the possibility that there are other perspectives, strengthens negative cognitions and rumination that can lead to a depressive mindset. When one is experiencing difficulties, gratitude can expand one's perspective. While painful aspects of the experience may remain, suffering is no longer the sole focus of attention. In the midst of suffering, grateful people often consider ways in which they have gained some measure of comfort, assistance, or insight [7].

This chapter will examine how gratitude relates to happiness and well-being. We will begin by examining two models that provide a theoretical framework for understanding how gratitude impacts well-being (i.e., Broaden-and-Build Theory; Find, Remind, and Bind Theory). Next, we will review empirical findings on the relationship between gratitude and well-being, with a particular focus on gratitude intervention studies. We will subsequently examine the role of gratitude and well-being in the context of several situations including the workplace, romantic relationships, and aging. Finally, we will provide practical strategies for enhancing gratitude in one's life and offer suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical models and empirical findings linking gratitude and well-being

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain why gratitude relates to well-being. Moreover, empirical studies have consistently shown that gratitude is related to lower levels of psychological distress, higher levels of psychological well-being, and better physical health. Of particular interest are studies evaluating the benefits of gratitude interventions. Gratitude interventions are designed to enhance gratitude through exercises that can be easily practiced and incorporated into one's life (e.g., gratitude journaling, gratitude letter writing).

2.1 Why gratitude contributes to well-being

Why might gratitude contribute to happiness and well-being? The Broaden-and-Build Theory posits that positive emotions like gratitude have an adaptive function that leads to enduring positive consequences [8]. The Find, Remind, and Bind Theory emphasizes that gratitude plays an important role in building interpersonal relationships, which in turn enhances happiness and well-being [9].

The Broaden-and-Build Theory assumes that positive and negative emotions function in different ways [8]. Fredrickson explained that negative emotions, which can occur during moments of danger, produce specific action tendencies such as the urge to attack in response to anger and the urge to escape in response to fear [8]. According to the theory, when danger or threat is present, it is adaptive to narrow one's response options and to select a course of action quickly. In contrast, positive emotions, which do not usually occur under conditions of threat or danger, tend to elicit a broader and more flexible range of thoughts and action tendencies [8]. For instance, Fredrickson suggested that people who are experiencing gratitude may experience the urge to engage in prosocial ways, which can result in a wide range of creative actions [10]. Importantly, responses to positive emotions such as gratitude are likely to be durable and help build

personal resources [10]. The urge to engage in prosocial behavior when one is experiencing gratitude can enhance and strengthen interpersonal relationships and social support systems [10]. Fredrickson noted that positive emotions can also trigger other positive emotions, which can lead to an “upward spiral” in positive affect that improves happiness and well-being [8]. The broadening and building aspects of gratitude and other positive emotions can be transformational for individuals, organizations, and communities [10].

The Find, Remind, and Bind Theory explains how gratitude can strengthen interpersonal relationships [9]. According to this theory, feelings of gratitude serve the important evolutionary function of facilitating the identification of suitable relationship partners by either “finding” a new suitable relationship partner or “reminding” one about the importance of an existing relationship partner [9]. After receiving a benefit, the recipient makes an attribution about the intentions behind the gift and the responsiveness of the benefactor to the person’s needs. Feelings of gratitude can lead to improvements in one’s perspective about the benefactor and can “bind” the relationship by increasing motivation to engage in relationship strengthening behaviors [9]. Thus, the expression of gratitude is an important component in relationship building.

Both of these theories shed light on how gratitude may improve well-being and why these improvements are likely to be durable. Gratitude changes our thoughts and actions in ways that have lasting benefits and that strengthen our interpersonal relationships. Empirical evidence has provided support for these theories and has revealed many ways that gratitude contributes to well-being.

2.2 Research findings concerning the relationship between gratitude and well-being

Studies have consistently shown that gratitude relates to lower levels of psychological distress. For example, Watkins et al. showed that gratitude was inversely related to depression, physical aggression, resentment, and narcissism [11]. Across three studies, Lin found that gratitude was related to lower levels of depression and suicidal ideation [12–14]. The relationship between gratitude and suicidal ideation was mediated or partially mediated by variables such as self-esteem, psychological well-being, and/or level of depression [12–14]. Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian found that gratitude predicted lower levels of depression and anxiety and concluded that these relationships could be explained by the fact that grateful participants were less critical and more compassionate toward themselves [15]. Sun et al. confirmed that gratitude was inversely related to depression and anxiety and identified cognitive flexibility as a mediator [16]. Taken together, these studies suggest that gratitude may serve as a buffer against negative emotions and suicidal ideation because it promotes an improved perspective of oneself and enhances coping strategies.

Research has also consistently found that gratitude relates to higher levels of positive emotions and well-being. For instance, Watkins et al. found that gratitude was positively related to satisfaction with life, positive affect, and happiness [11]. Wood et al. found that gratitude was positively related to several measures of psychological well-being (e.g., personal growth, positive relationships with others, self-acceptance, purpose in life) after controlling for the Five Factor model of personality [17]. Likewise, Llenares et al., found that gratitude was significantly related to happiness and resilience [18].

2.3 Gratitude intervention studies

Several studies have examined the impact of gratitude interventions on psychological and physical well-being. Two of the most commonly studied gratitude interventions encourage participants to maintain a gratitude journal or to write gratitude letters. Treatment outcome studies for each type of gratitude intervention are described below.

2.3.1 Gratitude journal interventions

Keeping a gratitude journal, which involves recording what one is grateful for, is a frequently studied gratitude intervention. For instance, Emmons and McCullough assessed the effectiveness of gratitude journaling in a series of three studies [19]. In Study 1, undergraduate participants kept a journal once a week for 10 weeks and were randomly assigned to write up to five things they were grateful for (gratitude condition), five things they were hassled by (hassles condition), or five neutral events (neutral events condition). Participants assigned to the gratitude journal condition showed greater optimism concerning the future and evaluated their lives more positively than those assigned to the other conditions. Gratitude journal participants also spent more time exercising and expressed fewer physical complaints than those assigned to other conditions.

The last two studies also evaluated the effectiveness of gratitude journal interventions with some modifications [19]. In study 2, undergraduate participants kept a daily journal for 2 weeks and were randomly assigned to a gratitude, hassles, or downward social comparison condition (i.e., list ways you are better off than others). Compared to other conditions, participants assigned to the gratitude condition showed higher levels of positive affect and increased helping behavior. Unlike Study 1, there were no health or exercise benefits between the conditions. In Study 3, the researchers examined the impact of keeping a gratitude journal on patients suffering from chronic illness (i.e., neuromuscular disease). Participants were assigned to a gratitude journal condition (daily journaling for 3 weeks) or a no-writing control condition. Participants assigned to the gratitude condition showed greater increases in positive affect, life satisfaction, optimism, and sleep quality, and greater decreases in negative affect compared those assigned to the control condition.

Researchers who have used different instructions for gratitude journal interventions and different comparison conditions have also demonstrated beneficial treatment effects. O'Leary and Dockray randomly assigned participants to a gratitude condition (gratitude diary and guided gratitude reflection), a mindfulness condition (mindfulness meditation and mindfulness diary), or a wait-list control condition [20]. Both of the interventions were delivered online four times a week for 3 weeks. Compared to control participants, those assigned to the gratitude and the mindfulness conditions showed reduced stress and depression and increased happiness. While similar effects were seen in both the gratitude and mindfulness interventions, the gratitude intervention led to a larger decrease in stress.

Beneficial effects of gratitude journal interventions have also been found using clinical samples. Kerr, O'Donovan, and Pepping assigned participants who were on an outpatient therapy waiting list to one of two treatment conditions or a placebo control condition [21]. Participants in the gratitude condition kept a gratitude journal and rated the intensity of their feelings of gratitude. Participants in the kindness condition kept a journal of their daily acts of kindness and reported the intensity of their

feelings of kindness. In contrast, participants in the placebo control condition simply rated their mood on a daily basis. Compared to the placebo condition, participants in both the gratitude and kindness conditions showed increased sense of connectedness with others, life satisfaction, and optimism, and decreased anxiety. This study provided evidence that maintaining gratitude journals can serve as a helpful activity for individuals who are waiting to receive psychotherapy [21].

Gratitude journal interventions may also have benefits for physical health. Jackowska et al. randomly assigned women working or studying at a university to a gratitude journal intervention, a daily events journal condition, or a no-treatment condition [22]. Participants in the journal conditions completed three entries each week for 2 weeks. Those assigned to the gratitude condition wrote about three things or people they were grateful for, whereas those assigned to the daily events condition wrote about three things that they noticed during the day. Participants in the gratitude condition showed improved optimism, increased positive emotional style, and reduced emotional distress as compared to other participants. Interestingly, they also showed improved sleep quality and had lower diastolic blood pressure compared to participants in the other conditions [22].

As noted in the studies above, gratitude journal interventions have been shown to decrease psychological distress, increase psychological well-being, and improve physical health when applied to various populations such as undergraduate college students, adults suffering from chronic illness, or adults waiting to receive outpatient psychotherapy. Another type of gratitude intervention that is beneficial involves writing gratitude letters.

2.3.2 Gratitude letter interventions

Gratitude letter interventions involve asking participants to write a gratitude letter to a person who has had a positive impact on their life and whose actions they deeply appreciate. In the letter, participants elaborate on how this person has affected their life and why they feel grateful for this person's efforts. Participants are often encouraged to share their letter by reading it to the recipient.

Gratitude letter interventions have been shown to reduce distress and improve well-being. For instance, Toepfer and Walker randomly assigned college students to a gratitude letter condition (participants hand wrote or typed three gratitude letters over the course of 8 weeks) or a control condition (no-writing) [23]. Participants in the gratitude letter condition showed greater increases in happiness and gratitude than those assigned to the no-writing condition. A cumulative positive impact was noted after writing each letter, suggesting that writing multiple letters over time can be beneficial [23]. In a similar follow-up study, Toepfer, Cichy, and Peters randomly assigned college students to a gratitude letter condition (i.e., write three gratitude letters over the course of 3 weeks) or a no-writing control condition [24]. Compared to control participants, those in the gratitude letter condition showed greater happiness and life satisfaction, and less depression.

There is evidence that gratitude letter interventions can be more beneficial than other types of writing exercises. Seligman et al. randomly assigned participants to one of five happiness exercises (i.e., write and share a gratitude letter, record three good things that happened each day, write about yourself at your best, complete signature strengths survey and apply findings, complete signature strengths survey only) or a placebo control exercise (write about early memories) [25]. Participants in all of the happiness exercise conditions showed greater happiness and less depression

compared to placebo control participants. While participants writing three good things showed positive benefits for the *longest* period of time, the gratitude letter exercise created the *largest* positive change in happiness and depression reduction compared to other exercises. Follow-up assessments revealed that participants who continually practiced these happiness exercises after the intervention sustained the most gains and were the happiest [25].

Researchers have studied the impact of gratitude letter writing when combined with attention bias modification. Attention bias modification is the process of training an individual to intentionally attend to specific stimuli while ignoring other stimuli [26]. This can be used in a positive manner, also known as positive attention bias modification (PABM), in which disengagement from negative stimuli is promoted to enhance positive emotion states [26]. Gratitude letter writing can be conceptualized as a means of teaching people to attend to positive aspects of the environment, but it does not require ignoring negative stimuli. Stone et al. evaluated the impact of gratitude letter writing separately from and combined with PABM [26]. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition involving gratitude letter writing, gratitude letter writing with PABM training, or a control writing activity and PABM training. Positive affect increased upon completion of gratitude letter writing compared to the control group. These effects were maintained for a longer period of time when gratitude letter writing was combined with a PABM program [26]. Thus, adding PABM training to gratitude letter writing may enhance positive outcomes.

3. Gratitude across various situations

Given the promising findings on the impact of gratitude on well-being, researchers have started to examine specific situations in which gratitude might be particularly beneficial. Below, we briefly review research examining gratitude in the context of the workplace, romantic relationships, and aging.

3.1 Gratitude and the workplace

Researchers have begun to examine how gratitude impacts well-being at work [27]. In a series of three studies, Cain et al. developed and validated a measure of workplace gratitude called the Gratitude at Work Scale (GAWS) [28]. Workplace gratitude was defined as “the tendency to notice and be thankful for how various aspects of a job affect one’s life” (p. 441) [28]. Participants rated the frequency they experienced gratitude for various aspects of their job on a Likert-type scale. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses produced two subscales: Gratitude for Meaningful Work (e.g., “How often are you grateful for the positive impact your job has on others?”) and Gratitude for Supportive Work Environment (e.g., “How often are you grateful for the support you receive from your coworkers?”). Both subscales related to less burnout after controlling for dispositional gratitude and workplace satisfaction. Lanham et al. similarly found that workplace gratitude predicted lower levels of burnout and higher levels of workplace satisfaction after controlling for trait gratitude, hope, and job contextual variables [29].

Researchers have also examined the effects of gratitude interventions on the well-being of employees. For instance, Cheng, Tsui, and Lam examined the impact of keeping a gratitude journal on stress and depression among health care professionals [30]. They randomly assigned employees from five public hospitals to keep a gratitude

journal, a hassles journal, or a no-treatment control condition. Those assigned to the journal conditions completed a journal entry twice per week for 4 weeks. All participants completed measures of depressive symptoms and perceived stress at pretest, posttest, and 3-month follow-up. Participants assigned to the gratitude condition showed greater decreases in depressive symptoms and stress over time compared to those assigned to the other conditions. Although the gratitude journal instructions and outcome variables were not specific to the workplace, the study findings were promising because they showed that health care employees can experience improved mental health following completion of a gratitude journal.

Another aspect of life in the workplace that may be impacted by gratitude is civility among employees. Locklear, Taylor, and Ambrose conducted two studies to evaluate the impact of a gratitude intervention on workplace mistreatment [31]. In study 1, they randomly assigned participants to complete a gratitude journal or a daily events journal at the end of each workday over the course of 2 weeks. Participants completed pretest and posttest surveys and nominated a coworker to report on the level of civility exhibited by participants at work. Participants assigned to the gratitude intervention engaged in fewer reported incidents of workplace mistreatment. This effect was mediated by enhancement in self-control resources, which enables people to modify their impulses and workplace behaviors to meet workplace norms [31]. In study 2, the researchers replicated the finding that keeping a gratitude journal lowered reported workplace mistreatment. Mediation analyses showed that the intervention led to an increase in self-control resources, and this effect was stronger for participants who perceived the organization's gratitude norms to be high [31].

Taken together, the evidence that gratitude relates to well-being in the workplace is promising. Interventions such as gratitude journaling have been shown to lower workplace mistreatment and enhance employee well-being. Additional research is needed on the effectiveness of gratitude interventions that are tailored to the workplace. For instance, employees could practice reflecting upon aspects of work they are grateful for and express their thankfulness to coworkers when warranted. Greater understanding of the impact of gratitude interventions on workplace variables such as burnout, employee satisfaction, workplace mistreatment, productivity, and teamwork is needed to help employers decide whether they wish to incorporate these interventions into the workplace.

Importantly, cultivating gratitude in the workplace should not be used as a means of denying or overlooking unjust working conditions or other problems in the workplace. For instance, employees who are not receiving a fair wage or who are experiencing mistreatment at work are not likely to feel grateful and should take action to address these problems. Research should examine whether there are any negative consequences to cultivating gratitude at work such as decreasing motivation to address problems that deserve attention.

Another life situation that may be particularly suited to gratitude is romantic relationships. Below, we discuss research showing that gratitude may be beneficial for romantic relationships because it strengthens the relationship and slows down the process of hedonic adaptation.

3.2 Gratitude and romantic relationships

Research has shown that gratitude in the context of romantic relationships relates to improved relationship quality and relationship satisfaction. Algoe, Gable, and Maisel asked heterosexual couples to complete daily questionnaires every night for

2 weeks that assessed their own and their partner's behavior, how they responded emotionally to their partner's behavior, daily relationship satisfaction, and daily relationship connection [32]. As expected, thoughtful behaviors by a partner from the previous day predicted increases in both feelings of gratitude and indebtedness. However, only feelings of gratitude predicted increases in relationship satisfaction and relationship connection the following day for both members of the couple. The authors concluded that gratitude may boost and strengthen relationships by turning everyday events into opportunities for relationship growth [32].

Gordon et al. used a variety of methodologies across three studies to examine how gratitude impacts romantic relationships [33]. In study 1, undergraduates in a romantic relationship completed a variety of measures of appreciation, partner responsiveness, and relationship satisfaction. Participants who felt higher levels of appreciation reported being more appreciative of their partners and more responsive to their partner's needs. In study 2, undergraduates in a romantic relationship completed measures of appreciation, relationship satisfaction, and commitment each night for 1 week. They were asked to complete follow-up measures 9 months later. Consistent with study 1, participants who felt appreciated by their partner were more likely to feel appreciation toward their partner in return. In addition, appreciation toward a partner was predictive of relationship continuity 9 months later. In study 3, the researchers obtained observer ratings of relationship responsiveness and commitment. Heterosexual members of dating couples from a community sample engaged in a series of videotaped conversations. Participants completed measures of appreciation and independent raters evaluated the couple's interactions for responsiveness, expressions of caring, and partner commitment. Participants who scored higher on appreciation for their partner were rated by observers as being more responsive to their partners and more committed to the relationship. The researchers concluded that feeling appreciated plays an important role in maintaining romantic relationships [33].

The benefits of gratitude for romantic relationships have also been demonstrated through intervention studies. Algoe, Fredrickson, and Gable studied the impact of gratitude expression among heterosexual couples who engaged in a series of videotaped interactions on two occasions with 2 weeks between sessions [34]. During the videotaped interactions involving gratitude, each member of the couple was asked to discuss something kind that their relationship partner had done for them and was given an opportunity to thank their partner. During videotaped interactions of a control task, each member of the couple was asked to describe a positive or negative event that had occurred that did not involve their partner. At least 6 months later, participants completed a survey about their views about the relationship. Perceived responsiveness of partners' expressions of gratitude predicted improvements in relationship satisfaction 6 months later. The authors concluded that this provides evidence for the important role that gratitude plays in strengthening dyadic relationships [34].

Other gratitude expression interventions have similarly shown benefits within romantic relationships. Algoe and Zhaoyang examined the impact of expressing gratitude on personal and relational well-being [35]. They randomly assigned romantic couples to a condition in which they expressed gratitude to their partner or a condition in which they responded to a self-disclosure from their partner. Participants completed measures of partner responsiveness, relationship satisfaction, and life satisfaction at pretest and posttest. Participants assigned to the gratitude condition showed greater improvements on relationship and personal well-being, with the greatest improvement occurring among participants who perceived their partner to be highly responsive.

Research has likewise found benefits for gratitude expression among married couples. Kubacka et al. conducted a longitudinal study to examine the role of gratitude in the maintenance of marital relationships [36]. Data on newlywed couples were collected at three points in time over the course of the first 4 years of marriage. Participants completed measures of gratitude and their relationship (i.e., relationship satisfaction, perceived partner responsiveness, relationship maintenance behaviors). Feelings of gratitude in the marriage resulted from their partner's actions to maintain the relationship and the perception of their partner's responsiveness. Gratitude subsequently increased motivation to engage in relationship building actions toward their partner. These effects of gratitude persisted across the four-year data collection period, which highlights the importance of gratitude in relationship maintenance beyond the early stages of the relationship [36]. Similarly, Schramm et al. found that verbal and behavioral expressions of gratitude were associated with higher marital satisfaction and better adaptation among newly married couples [37].

In addition to promoting relationship building behaviors, gratitude may help to minimize hedonic adaptation in relationships. Hedonic adaptation occurs when positive feelings associated with the beginning of a new romantic relationship diminish over time [38]. As Bao and Lyubomirsky noted, gratitude and appreciation help couples to notice and focus on the positive changes that have occurred since the onset of the relationship, savor the positive aspects of the relationship, and lower expectations that more is needed from the partner in order to experience happiness in the relationship [38].

Further research is needed to determine whether gratitude interventions in romantic relationships are ever contraindicated. For instance, in a relationship that involves abusive behavior, could gratitude interventions decrease motivation for an abused partner to leave the relationship or to advocate for changes? Could gratitude interventions be counterproductive for individuals who have difficulty asserting their needs within the context of the relationship? Future research should seek to identify which couples are most appropriate for gratitude interventions.

Aging is another situation in which gratitude may be beneficial. Below we describe studies showing how gratitude can contribute to well-being among older adults.

3.3 Gratitude and aging

Researchers studying gratitude across the lifespan have shown that gratitude can be beneficial for older adults [39]. One aspect of psychological distress for older adults that may be lessened by gratitude is loneliness. Many older adults face limited mobility and increased social isolation, which puts them at greater risk for loneliness. Chui and Diehal examined gratitude and mental health across various age groups (young adults, middle-aged adults, older adults) and found that gratitude was related to less loneliness across all of the age groups [40]. Among older adults, there was a stronger relationship between gratitude and loneliness among men than among women. The authors noted the importance of considering gender differences with respect to gratitude among older adults [40]. Gratitude among older adults has also been shown to be positively related to helping behavior and self-reported health, and inversely related to hostility [41].

Gratitude interventions focused on older adults have yielded promising results. Killen and Macaskill examined the impact of keeping a gratitude journal among adults aged 60 years or older [42]. Participants were instructed to record three good things that happened every day for 2 weeks and were given the choice of selecting

an online or a paper version of the intervention. Participants completed a variety of well-being measures at pretest, posttest, and 1 month follow-up. Participants showed increases in flourishing at posttest, and these improvements were maintained at one-month follow-up. They also reported lower levels of stress at posttest but this change was not maintained at follow-up. No differences were found in the effectiveness of the intervention based upon delivery method (online versus paper). Interestingly, gratitude scores did not change across the course of the intervention.

In another gratitude intervention for older adults, Bartlett and Arpin assigned participants to a gratitude condition or a control condition [43]. For 3 weeks, participants assigned to the gratitude condition listed three good things that happened each day and described why they happened. In contrast, participants in the control group did not engage in a writing activity. On days participants experienced higher gratitude, they reported less loneliness, greater well-being, and fewer health problems. Furthermore, those assigned to the gratitude condition showed less loneliness and fewer health symptoms over time compared to those assigned to the control condition. Reductions in loneliness helped to explain the relationship between gratitude and fewer health problems.

Researchers have also tested the effects of multi-component gratitude interventions. Salces-Cubero et al. randomly assigned adults ages 60–89 to one of three interventions (gratitude, optimism, savoring) or a no-intervention control condition [44]. All interventions consisted of four sessions offered at a local senior center. Participants assigned to the gratitude condition completed a variety of exercises such as reflecting on gratitude within the past 6 months, sharing about gratitude with other group members, practicing gratitude expression, and enhancing awareness about gratitude. Participants assigned to the other conditions completed a variety of exercises related to optimism or savoring. All participants completed measures of well-being at pretest, posttest, and one-month follow-up. The study found that participants assigned to the gratitude and savoring conditions showed increased life satisfaction, happiness, and resilience, and decreased negative affect compared to those assigned to the other conditions.

Even single-session gratitude interventions can have a positive impact on older adults. Lau and Cheng [45] randomly assigned adults ages 55–85 to a gratitude condition, a hassle condition, or a neutral condition. Participants in each condition were invited to a laboratory and spent 15–20 minutes writing and reflecting upon up to five things they were grateful for (gratitude condition), hassled by (hassle condition), or important life events (neutral condition). Those assigned to the gratitude writing condition showed lower death anxiety compared to those assigned to the other conditions. It is not clear how long reductions in death anxiety lasted because assessment measures were taken immediately after completion of the writing exercise. However, other researchers have similarly shown that gratitude is inversely related to death anxiety [46]. Future studies should explore the extent to which longer gratitude interventions for older adults lessen death anxiety and how long the effects endure.

4. Conclusion

Positive psychology theories and empirical findings have shed light on how gratitude contributes to happiness and well-being. Theoretical frameworks highlight the role gratitude plays in enhancing interpersonal relationships and in promoting enduring positive change by expanding perspectives and action possibilities.

Numerous studies have shown that gratitude relates to less psychological distress, greater psychological well-being, and improved physical health. Research has uncovered several situations in which gratitude may be particularly beneficial such as the workplace, romantic relationships, and aging.

Importantly, gratitude exercises have been developed that can effectively promote well-being. Two examples highlighted in this chapter involve maintaining a gratitude journal and writing gratitude letters. These interventions are simple to complete, are not time intensive, and are inexpensive to implement. Thus, they can be practiced by anyone who is interested in practicing gratitude and who has the ability to engage in reflection and writing exercises. These interventions could easily be modified for individuals who do not enjoy writing or who are unable to write. For example, gratitude journals and gratitude letters could be constructed through audio or video recordings instead of writing. Gratitude interventions could also be modified to allow participants to draw upon their talents in creative and/or performing arts. Gratitude exercises can incorporate photography, painting, sculpting, creative writing, or song writing. Research is needed to systematically examine the effectiveness of these variations on gratitude interventions because offering gratitude interventions that match the interests and talents of participants may improve the likelihood that they will complete the intervention and continue to practice gratitude afterward.

Most empirically validated gratitude interventions are designed to be completed individually. Researchers have not extensively examined the possible benefits of delivering gratitude interventions in a group format. Other group members can serve as role models and sources of inspiration for participants. Group interventions also enable participants to build new interpersonal relationships while working on gratitude. This could be particularly important for people who are experiencing social isolation. In a group format, participants can receive reinforcement and encouragement from other group members, which may increase their motivation to complete gratitude exercises.

Another important area for researchers to consider is whether there are any contraindications to participating in gratitude interventions. For instance, do gratitude interventions that are implemented at work decrease motivation for employees to address workplace problems with their supervisors? Do gratitude interventions among romantic couples decrease motivation to address problems in the relationship? Are relationship focused gratitude interventions counterproductive for individuals who have difficulty asserting their needs in the relationship? Do some individuals experience shame or distress over their difficulties experiencing, expressing, or receiving messages of gratitude? Researchers need to provide more insight into which individuals are most likely to benefit from gratitude interventions. Although more work is needed, research to date has convincingly demonstrated that gratitude has positive benefits. Individuals who are seeking to reduce distress, enhance positive feelings, improve their health, and strengthen their relationships may wish to consider ways to increase gratitude in their lives.

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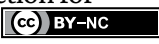
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Chapter 8

Enacting Happiness from Emotions and Moods

Éric Laurent, Kévin Bague, Colin Vegas and Jonathan Dartevelle

“Felicity is a lasting state of pleasure”.

Leibniz (c. 1690)

Abstract

The pursuit of happiness has been an important component of philosophical thought for a long time. Traditionally, happiness could be viewed as the result of rational thinking and personal project management. We review the literature in cognitive biology and psychology revealing why happiness could complementarily be conceived as an emerging feeling, anchored in daily emotions and moods. Finally, we propose a framework in which happiness builds on distributed and dynamic bodily processes with which abstract thought interacts. Data coming from complexity science, neuroscience, psychopathology, and cognitive behavioral therapies are gathered in this chapter in order to account for the coordination between “bottom-up” and “top-down” happiness geneses.

Keywords: affective science, cognitive science, complexity, coordination, emergence

1. Introduction

Happiness has a very special place in intellectual life. Happiness has been the ultimate goal of occidental philosophy for centuries. In Aristotle’s philosophy, a critical distinction was proposed between pleasure and happiness. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguished between the ultimate means (“*eudaimonia*,” or happiness) and multiple intermediate goals (*e.g.*, pleasure, money). This distinction is critical for two reasons. First, different temporal scales are respectively associated with happiness and with other affective events. While pleasure tends to refer to short-term experience, happiness is related to a judgment that would encompass the entire life. Second, it generates hierarchical relationships between happiness and any other affective experiences. While pleasure can be an end, it is also a means (to reach happiness). In contrast, happiness is the end of many means, but the means of nothing else [1]. Then, philosophical wisdom and virtue would consist in searching for happiness through truth.

While Western philosophy generally acknowledges a potential filiation between accumulated affective experiences and happiness, it mainly emphasizes the central role of knowledge and reasoning in reaching *eudaimonia*. For instance, in the *Banquet*, Plato reported that generally what is desired is what we do not have, while what we have got could be what we once desired (*i.e.*, in the past, not in the present).

Schopenhauer stated that all our life oscillates between suffering (when we do not have what we desire) and boredom (when we have what we desire). See [1] for an analysis of these philosophical trends and their comparison with the Chinese tradition, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore, there should be a “mindset” favoring happiness. For instance, Spinoza points out that enjoying what we get is a condition of happiness. The responsibility of rational thought in affective experience has been specially underlined by Stoicists according to whom our thoughts are like a filter of external events, which gives rise to meaning and passion regulation. More generally, the dissociation between body and soul largely shared in Western philosophy has placed strong responsibility on thoughts in happiness development. This is what we would name today a “top-down view” on happiness development.

However, how emotions, moods, and other affective experiences are coordinated with “happiness” (viewed as higher-order affective experience) is still unclear. Is happiness regulated by rational thought and other “high-level” cognitive processes, or is happiness more “embodied” and related to everyday life affective events? Those questions are far ancient, but the frameworks offered by cognitive science related to how information circulates in the brain and the body and interacts with other information in the environment, could contribute to refine our understanding of happiness. We will first provide some landmarks about top-down and bottom-up processing in humans, and then successively discuss evidence coming from psychology and neuroscience for bottom-up and top-down influences on happiness. Finally, we will share a perspective combining those influences in order to contribute to a cognitive approach to happiness.

2. A cognitive science background: “Top-down”, “bottom-up”, and complexity-oriented conceptions of behavior and phenomenal processes

The development of cognitive psychology has been largely based on the computational metaphor (*e.g.*, [2]) (*i.e.*, the [abusive] assimilation of the human mind to a computer) (see [3] for a recent and parsimonious approach to computationalism; and [4–6] for discussions about limitations of computationalism). The subsequently associated dissociation between “hardware” and “software” in the study of cognition was consistent with most dualist philosophical approaches. Cognitive psychology has mainly been concerned with the “software” and highlighted the role of “knowledge” and its relationships with memory, learning, reasoning, perception, and decision-making. As mentioned by Petersen and Sporns, “*Most accounts of human cognitive architectures have focused on computational accounts of cognition while making little contact with the study of anatomical structures and physiological processes*” [7]. Yet, a large part of the dynamics (*i.e.*, change with time) that characterizes humans is related to biology. Physiological needs, for instance, reflect the state of the organism, including at the cell level. These needs are modified with time and have non-anecdotal effects on cognition: they introduce complexity and nonlinear behaviors [8]. Mainstream cognitive science, generally a bit far from these later issues, has developed models where dynamical systems are not the reference. It has generally relied on top-down processes. “*The basic notions of top-down and bottom-up processing [...], may be broken down into the differences between an idea that emerges from the mind and one that emerges from the senses. One is based on thought, and the other is based on direct experience*”. Bottom-up would refer to lower-level, often sensory-guided, activity, while top-down would be employed to account for higher-level cognitive activity. Beyond the level of processing, authors may refer to a sense of information circulation

(from the bottom to the top or from the top to the bottom). In the current chapter, we will employ the distinction between those processes for both of their meanings simultaneously.

This distinction can have important consequences for our understanding of happiness since the latter could either principally emerge from direct experience and emotions related to our immersion in the environment, or be mainly conceived as a result of a cognitive mindset. In any case, emotions and moods appear to be tied to happiness, with different roles played in its “cognitive architecture” as a function of the theoretical proposal. In the next section, we will first review evidence for bottom-up, emerging happiness from the field of psychology.

3. Emerging happiness: evidence from psychology

Through a critical review of psychological models of happiness determinants and other related empirical studies, this section reports the arguments in favor of emergent (affective) sources of happiness. That is, affective factors, such as emotions, which would modulate happiness in a bottom-up rather than top-down manner.

3.1 Initial scientific pessimism

In the field of psychology, happiness measurement is commonly operationalized by the self-reported measure of “subjective well-being” (SWB), which is defined by frequent positive affect (prevalence of pleasant emotions and moods), high life satisfaction, and infrequent negative affect (prevalence of non-pleasant emotions and moods [9]). Even though happiness is associated with several advantages such as better self-control [10], superior work outcomes [11], and a strengthened immune system [12], research about sources of sustainable SWB improvement has been neglected until the early 2000s. This neglect has been even stronger for the study of bottom-up sources of happiness. According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), this neglect was due to a “scientific pessimism” about the ability of individuals to increase their happiness over time [13]. The three main well-documented causes of this pessimism are strong genetic determinism of happiness [13–15], temporal stability of the two personality traits more strongly associated with happiness (*i.e.*, neuroticism and extroversion; [15, 16]), and the hedonic adaptation process (also known as the “*hedonic treadmill*”). This process represents the automatic tendency of humans to readjust their happiness to its initial level after a short-term positive or negative change of personal experience [17, 18]. Despite these three impediments, researchers have recently accumulated findings indicating that happiness is a complex multi-determined concept that can be sustainably increased. Interestingly, these findings have not been restricted to top-down processes. They also indicate that the sustainable increase in happiness can be underpinned by emergent (bottom-up) sources.

3.2 Emerging sources of happiness according to the hedonic adaptation prevention model (HAP model)

Factors promoting a sustainable improvement of happiness have been progressively revealed through the development of successive empirically supported theoretical models. The Sustained Happiness Model (SHM) has been the seminal modeling of happiness determinants [13]. It posits that SWB is determined by three general factors:

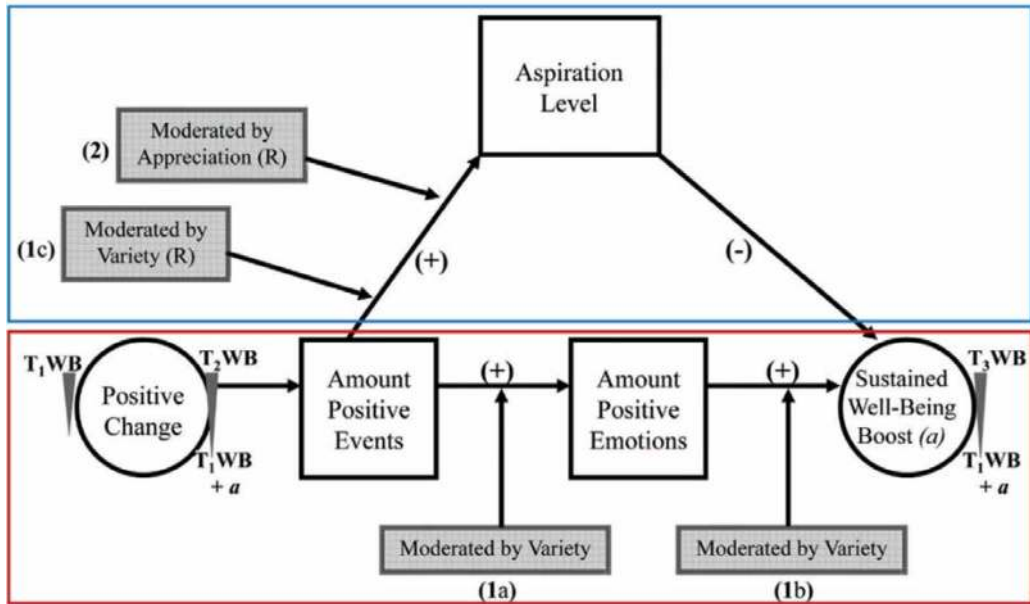


Figure 1. Hedonic adaptation prevention model and its two main routes. Notes. Model adapted from [Sheldon, K. M., and Lyubomirsky, S. (2012). *The challenge of staying happier: Testing the Hedonic Adaptation Prevention model. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(5), 670–680. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212436400>]; [18]. Original figure p. 671 (“Figure 1”), in Sheldon & Lyubomirsky (2012). Copyright © 2012 by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc. Adapted with Permission of Sage Publications. A = well-being initial boost. WB = subjective well-being, T = measurement time. = bottom-up route (marking added in this chapter), = top-down route (marking added in this chapter), (+) = positive effect on, (-) = negative effect on.

genetic basis, intentional activities (*i.e.*, activities or practices that people deliberately decide to engage in, requiring effort to be achieved, *e.g.*, trying to be generous with other people), and circumstances (*i.e.*, stable and incidental events such as life changes that occur by themselves in an individual’s life, *e.g.*, getting a new apartment).¹

Circumstances are a particularly relevant determinant regarding emergent happiness. Indeed, it suggests that it is possible to achieve a sustainable increase in happiness from the daily life changes that are experienced, that are not related to a volitional pursuit of happiness. This bottom-up route to happiness was conceived and experimentally tested by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2012) as part of the empirical validation of the Hedonic Adaptation Prevention model (HAP model; **Figure 1**; [18]).

3.2.1 Variety

This HAP model includes a non-affective emergent source that promotes the persistence of an initial SWB boost from a positive life change by limiting the hedonic adaptation process. This emergent source of happiness is variety. In two experiments, Sheldon et al. (2012) showed that rating or practicing varied experiences derived from a positive life change was associated with long-term persistence of the initial increase in SWB [19]. Conversely, repeated exposure to the same experience derived from a positive life change was associated with a decrease in SWB, consistent with the

¹ According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), one critical distinction between “circumstances” and “intentional activities” is related to the amount of associated effort: “[...] circumstances happen to people, and activities are ways that people act on their circumstances” (p. 118; [13]).

hedonic adaptation process [19, 20]. The more we are exposed to the same derived life experience, the more its effects are understood and anticipated, and the less the associated pleasure will be, resulting in happiness returning to its initial state [21]. Thus, regardless of a particular state of mind oriented toward happiness pursuit, happiness could be sustainably increased through a bottom-up process. The first source of this emergent happiness is variety of daily life experiences that contributes to generating pleasure from positive life changes [22].

3.2.2 Positive life events and emotions

The global empirical validation of the HAP model has been conducted by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2012; [18]). In a longitudinal study based on the reports of 488 students, SWB was measured three times (T1, T2, and T3) at 6-week intervals. At T2, students were asked to indicate the most important positive life change since T1 (referred to as “original life change”). They were also asked questions related to the amount of positive “thought-events” derived from the original life change (“Amount of Positive Events”), positive affect experienced from the original life change (“Amount of Positive Emotions”), variety, appreciation of the original change, and aspiration (*i.e.*, the qualitative and quantitative contentment level of the original change).

Path analyses validated the HAP model, consisting of two routes influencing SWB maintenance over time: one referring to a bottom-up process (boxed in red in **Figure 1**) and another referring to a top-down process (boxed in blue in **Figure 1**). Both routes originate from a positive original life change that occurs, independently of a volitional pursuit of happiness [18].

Interestingly, the bottom-up route highlights two new related emergent sources of happiness: the number of positive events derived from the original life change and the number of positive emotions associated with that change. Indeed, results showed that the more participants reported frequent positive thought-events related to the original life change, the more they derived (in intensity) positive emotions from that change (*i.e.*, happy, pleased, joyful, relaxed, and cheerful emotions), and the more the SWB at T3 was important. In addition, the authors found that variety was an enhancer of this relationship. The more participants reported frequent varied experiences derived from the original change, the greater the effect of positive emotions derived from the original change on the sustained increase in SWB [18].

However, the positive effect of this bottom-up process on the sustained increase in SWB can be diminished by a top-down process that corresponds to the second route of the HAP model. The results showed that the more participants reported positive thought-events derived from the original life change, the more they aspired to an even better change and the less the initial SWB gain was maintained. But the data also indicated that the more participants continued to appreciate the original positive life change, and reported various experiences derived from that change, the less they experienced aspiration. Thus, this detrimental top-down process on sustainable SWB increase can be inhibited to favor the positive effect of the bottom-up process. This can be achieved thanks to appreciation and variety, two moderators that inhibit aspiration, *i.e.*, the desire to “want more”. High-level processes are particularly complex because they can lead, depending on the direction of thoughts, to either a decrease or a sustainable increase in happiness [23, 24]. Later in this chapter, we will embrace a more sophisticated view on these top-down processes and see how they can be used to support a sustainable increase in happiness.

3.2.3 Summary and criticisms of the HAP model

In sum, the empirical work on the HAP model supports the existence of an emergent pathway to happiness. This emergent pathway is based on the idea that in everyday life we experience positive life changes regardless of a volitional pursuit of happiness. These life changes lead to a short-term gain in SWB that can be sustained by various factors embedded in daily life experiences derived from these changes, referred to in this paper as “emergent sources,” which will prevent the hedonic adaptation process. Considering the results obtained by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2012), the emergent source that most directly promotes sustainable SWB increase has an affective nature, namely the positive emotions derived from the original life change. The more positive the derived emotions, the more limited the hedonic adaptation process, and the more the initial gain in SWB (due to the initial life change) can be maintained in the following months. Two other related non-affective emergent sources more indirectly contribute to the sustained increase in SWB: the number of positive events and the variety of life experiences all derived from the original positive life change. The most important source of both is variety, as it promotes positive emotions and inhibits aspiration, while the quantity of positive events (which increases aspiration) “only” promotes positive emotions derived from the original life change [18, 22].

It can be noticed that in the HAP model, the so-called “top-down” route to happiness is supplied by the bottom-up route. While the bottom-up route of the HAP model incorporates the one and only input of the model (i.e., positive life change independent of a volitional pursuit of happiness), the “top-down” processes are only a secondary reaction caused by the bottom-up processes and cannot exist without them. Indeed, appreciation and inspiration would not occur without the life events derived from the original change. This empirically supported organization of the HAP model reinforces the relevance of its integration in the proposal of an emergent approach to happiness. However, this should not lead to the general conclusion that bottom-up processes predominate over top-down processes in enhancing happiness. Several data suggest that rather than being two independent routes, bottom-up and top-down processes may have a circular relationship, discussed later in this chapter.

Regarding specifically the bottom-up route of the HAP model, the emotions derived from life change must be positive to promote sustained increases in happiness. This suggests that if these emotions are not positive, such as hatred, then they will not favor the maintenance of the initial gain in SWB. In their paper related to the “secret of happiness,” Tamir et al. (2017) obtained intriguing results that question the bottom-up route of the HAP model [25]. Indeed, their results suggest that it is not enough for the emotions derived from life changes to be “merely” positive to promote a sustained increase in SWB. In their study, more than two thousand students first indicated the emotions they wanted to feel. Then they performed an unrelated, emotionally neutral word-generation task for five minutes, and reported their current emotions and SWB. The results showed that participants’ SWB was positively related, not to the positive emotions experienced, but rather to the equality between the emotions experienced and those desired. In other words, the happiest participants were those who were able to experience the emotions they wanted to experience, whether they were pleasant (e.g., love) or not pleasant (e.g., anger). Thus, it is likely that to achieve a sustainable increase in SWB, the important thing is not to derive positive emotions from the life change, but rather to derive emotions more generally consistent with the ones that we want to experience. However, the structure of the HAP model has not yet been reconsidered according to this possibility [22].

3.3 Environmental stressors

Studies on the empirical validation of the HAP model have not been the only ones to provide arguments in favor of a bottom-up modulation of happiness. Individuals' stress level is a critical component of their affective state. In everyday life, we may be confronted with external events that can generate stress and thus modify our affective state in a bottom-up manner. These events fall into the category of "environmental stressors" [26], which include daily hassles (e.g., traffic congestion, disruptive students), ambient stressors (e.g., car noise, dust in eyes), stressful life events (e.g., bereavement, child's birth) and cataclysmic events (e.g., major storms, heatwave). Within this framework, several studies have shown that environmental stressors have a significant impact on SWB.

3.3.1 Daily hassles

Feist et al. (1995) asked 160 students to complete a battery of self-reported scales every 1 month for 4 months to better understand the causal influences of happiness [27]. They obtained results indicating that daily hassles (considered as a bottom-up factor in the model), such as financial inadequacies or time constraints, do not directly but indirectly decrease SWB level, through the degradation of constructive thinking (i.e., developing coping strategies from life experiences). More recently and specifically, Udayar et al. (2021) showed, using data from 1170 individuals living in Switzerland, that daily hassles (e.g., financial inadequacy, having an illness, family problems) negatively predict life satisfaction, one of the three components of SWB [28].

3.3.2 Ambient stressors

Numerous studies have highlighted that noise annoyance decreases one or more components of SWB, with a preferential deterioration of affective state [29, 30]. Based on cross-sectional data from 15,010 participants, Beutel et al. (2016) showed that negative affect (i.e., anxiety and depressive symptoms in the study) increased significantly with the overall degree of daily noise annoyance (among different annoyances, such as road traffic, aircraft, or railways). For the extreme annoyance group (i.e., participants who responded with the highest intensity on a 5-point scale), the prevalence ratios were 1.97 and 2.14 for depressive symptoms and anxiety, respectively [31].

More recently, in their meta-analysis and systematic review, Gong et al. (2022) found that noise-annoyed people had a, respectively, 55% (6 studies) and 23% (8 studies) increased risk of anxiety and depressive symptoms compared to people with low noise annoyance [32]. This detrimental effect of noise annoyance on affective state (and thus on SWB) would also be devoid of a habituation effect [33] and would also concern children [34]. Low air quality in offices would also increase negative affect, such as anger, sadness, and anxiety [35]. Conversely, some noises would improve SWB, such as natural sounds (e.g., the sound of water; [36]).

3.3.3 Stressful life events

In the literature, it is well established that stressful life events have a significant influence on SWB [37–43]. Luhmann et al. (2012) conducted a large meta-analysis in which they analyzed the consequences of 8 commonly studied stressful life events (i.e., marriage, divorce, bereavement, child's birth, unemployment, reemployment,

retirement, relocation/migration), from longitudinal data of 188 publications (65,911 participants). Overall, they showed that most of these 8 life events had different effects on affective state and life satisfaction, the latter component of SWB being the most strongly and consistently influenced [44]. These effects were independent of the presumed desirability of the stressful life events, contrary to what has been proposed previously [45].

More specifically, the detailed analyses of Luhmann et al. showed that marriage causes only a short-term increase in life satisfaction, with no significant affective change. Divorce causes on average an increase in life satisfaction and pleasant affect in the months following the event, after an initial moderate decrease. Bereavement causes a strong initial decrease in SWB, especially for life satisfaction, followed by a rapid hedonic adaptation. Child's birth is associated with a mild initial increase in life satisfaction, which decreases in the following months. Nevertheless, this event is also associated with a minor increase in pleasant affect in subsequent years. Unemployment causes a strong initial decrease in life satisfaction, which then increases over time. Unemployment would also cause, on average (with very heterogeneous results), a decrease in pleasant affects without significant change in the following months. Reemployment would cause a weak initial and long-term increase in pleasant affects. Surprisingly, the latter event causes an initial decrease in life satisfaction, which then increases in the following months. Retirement causes an initial decrease in life satisfaction, and then an increase in both life satisfaction and pleasant affect in the following years. Finally, relocation and migrations, according to the data of only 5 studies, would cause both an initial and long-term increase in life satisfaction and pleasant affects [44].

3.3.4 Cataclysmic events

A variety of cataclysmic events negatively impact SWB. With cross-selected data from 7110 urban and rural Indonesians, Rahman et al. (2022) found that climatic disasters (e.g., floods, landslides, droughts, wildfires) degrade SWB of rural residents (life satisfaction and affective state), contrary to urban residents for whom SWB remains stable. Thus, residents living in rural areas would have a SWB level particularly vulnerable to climate disasters [46]. The negative relationship between climate disasters and SWB decline has also been found in Japanese [47], American [48], German [49], Asian [50], and French individuals [51]. Compared to storms that would cause a short-term decrease in SWB, the effect of floods would persist much longer, up to 4–5 years after the event occurred [49–52].

In another context, Danzer and Danzer (2016) estimated the long-term consequences of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster on SWB, with a survey including about 24,000 Ukrainians (20 years after the disaster). They used radiation exposure as a proxy for disaster impact. Their results showed a sustained bottom-up deterioration in happiness, as Ukrainians unwillingly affected by the disaster that occurred had lower life satisfaction and higher rates of depression than Ukrainians not directly affected by the disaster [53].

3.4 Discussion

The objective of this section was to provide empirical arguments from the field of psychology that support “emergent happiness” (i.e., that contribute to a bottom-up modulation of happiness). Happiness was operationalized through the concept of SWB (frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and high life satisfaction [9]).

Recent empirical arguments were drawn from two different fields of the literature: the empirical validation of the HAP model and the investigation of environmental stressors' effects on SWB components. Studies focusing on the empirical validation of the HAP model have highlighted three emerging sources that contribute to a sustained increase in happiness despite hedonic adaptation. These sources are (1) frequent positive emotions derived from an original positive life change (i.e., a trip), (2) amount of positive events derived from the original life change, and (3) variety of positive events derived from the original life change [18, 19, 22].

Regarding environmental stressors, their effects on the components of SWB have been extensively studied in psychology. Through a non-exhaustive review of this literature, we have shown that the 4 main categories of environmental stressors, namely daily hassles, ambient stressors (especially noise annoyance), stressful life events, and cataclysmic events (especially floods), are associated with short and in some cases long term degradation of SWB, especially through the decrease in life satisfaction [28, 32, 44, 46].

However, as mentioned earlier in psychological studies, the measurement of happiness is operationalized by the self-reported measure of SWB (with scales related to life satisfaction and/or experienced affect, *e.g.*, the satisfaction with life scale, [54]). Thus, the evidence in favor of emerging happiness that has been outlined in this section is all restricted to a single macroscopic level of observation (i.e., self-reported subjective judgment). The use of a multi-level approach, *i.e.*, the aggregation of arguments from different levels of observation (from the macroscopic to the microscopic), allows for greater validity and better understanding of phenomena [8, 55]. Thus, emerging happiness is likely to develop manifestations at other levels than that which is accessible to consciousness through self-reports. For this reason, the following section focuses on the neuroscientific (*i.e.*, often more microscopic) approach to happiness.

4. Bottom-up and top-down routes to happiness: insights from neuroscience

It is only recently that neurosciences and psychiatry have contributed to systematically studying happiness [56]. For a long time, research had focused on the emotional processes underlying pathologies. In the literature, terms such as “happiness,” “well-being,” or even “satisfaction” are often associated or confused [57]. Moreover, it is difficult to measure such variables otherwise than by using self-reported scales [54, 58]. The direct study of these dimensions is, therefore, hardly suitable for the classical methods used in neurosciences. As explained above (Section 3), the experience of positive emotions and their accumulation is a key element for happiness emergence. Seeking and experiencing positive affects corresponds to hedonia, an essential contributor to happiness and well-being [59]. Significant progress has been made in understanding the emergence of affects and positive emotions and their relationships with brain function. Studies in neuroscience focus on hedonia because the latter is correlated with and participates in, the emergence of happiness and well-being (see [60] for a proposed conceptual model). The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of current knowledge about the emergence and processing of positive emotions and affect and how they contribute to happiness since the former is often considered as a “proxy” for the latter. A classic standpoint in neuroscience consists in the attribution of the responsibility of the responses based on the perceptual

processing of emotional stimuli to subcortical regions (like amygdala, ventral pallidum, or thalamus). Therefore these “low-level” structures have been identified as supporting “bottom-up” processing. By contrast, “high-level” processes based on integrated cognitive processing of emotional stimuli are preferentially attributed to cortical structures (such as the prefrontal lobe), which are thought to underlie “top-down” processing [61–63]. This dissociation (subcortical regions = “bottom-up” process/cortical regions = “top-down” process) will be discussed in the last part of this section but has also been taken as a landmark to organize this section.

4.1 Specific regions associated with positive emotions

George and collaborators (1995) were among the first to study brain activation as a function of stimulus valence in order to evaluate the specificity of brain coding for emotional valence [64]. The authors used H215O positron emission tomography (PET) to study changes in regional cerebral blood flow (rCBF) on a sample of 11 women when happy, sad, or neutral states were induced. In this study, happiness was considered as a transient emotional state induced by self-generated positive emotions via memory and by showing positive emotional faces with the instruction to feel the corresponding emotion. According to their results, transient happiness was associated with a reduction in rCBF in the right prefrontal and bilateral temporal-parietal regions. Sadness was associated with bilateral activation in the cingulate, medial prefrontal, and mesial temporal cortex but also in thalamus and putamen. These data suggest that there are different neural substrates activated depending on stimulus valence. Using the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), Pelletier and collaborators (2003) challenged this conclusion. They reported that neutral, happy, or sad states were associated with similar activation in the orbitofrontal, left medial prefrontal, and left and ventrolateral prefrontal as well as left anterior temporal pole. But, in those regions, loci of activation were situated in different sub-regions. Their conclusion is that happy or sad states activate similar brain areas but different neural circuits [65].

In a substantial review, in the framework of the Human Affectome Project, Alexander and collaborators (2021) have identified different key brain regions involved in the experience of positive emotions and affect. Cortical regions including prefrontal cortex (PFC), orbitofrontal cortex (OFC), and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), and subcortical regions like insula or amygdala were considered. Although these regions may have different cognitive functions regarding the evaluation of emotional stimuli, the regulation of affective states, or decision making; they contribute to the emergence, processing, and maintenance of a positive emotional state and to the emergence of well-being and happiness [60]. In sum, the experience of positive affects is associated with a vast neural network distributed throughout the brain, which involves both cortical and subcortical regions. In the next part, we are discussing the specific role of subcortical regions, often associated with bottom-up processes.

4.2 Bottom-up influences on positive emotions

Beyond the key brain areas identified in the processing and experience of positive emotions, hedonic hotspots have been identified in nucleus accumbens, ventral pallidum, forebrain, limbic cortical regions, or brainstem [66]. Based on Kringelbach et Berridge, these hedonic hotspots are said to cause the pleasure reaction in increasing

“liking” feeling and are associated with hedonia. Experimentally studied using micro-injections of opioids, endocannabinoids or other neurochemical substances, these areas measure approximately 1 cubic centimeter in humans. Hedonic hotspots do not work according to an on/off mode. For example, stimulation of hedonic hotspots by opioids in the nucleus accumbens amplifies “liking” but this same area stimulated by dopamine amplifies “wanting” reactions. However, “wanting” a salient reward does not necessarily mean that this reward is appreciated [67]. Authors suggest that “liking” is a component of pleasure in connection with a reward and can lead to a subjective feeling of happiness.

These hedonic hotspots make salient a stimulus and allow an approach motivation through the processes of “liking.” Ventral pallidum is a region involved in the implementation of this motivated behavior. This subcortical structure is part of the reward system and its activation increases stimulus attractivity [68]. Ventral pallidum is essential to the production of behaviors adapted to reward but is also involved in the phenomena of drug dependence [69]. Studies in nonhuman animals also indicated that injury of ventral pallidum abolishes the pleasurable reaction to a stimulus, which corresponds to a state of anhedonia [70, 71]. Activation of hedonic hotspots and ventral pallidum participates in the emergence of pleasure through the evaluation and search for reward. Reward is simply made salient and attractive, and this evaluation is independent of “high-level” cognitive processes. These are “bottom-up” processes based on the perception and evaluation of a stimulus leading to a motivated, approach behavior. Seeking reward and pleasure is an adaptive behavior participating in the experience of positive emotions [66].

The insula is a region that makes the interface between cortical and subcortical regions, and also contributes to adaptive behavior. The links between the insula and positive emotion remain largely unknown. In a review, Uddin and collaborators (2017) reported on functioning and connectivity of this region [72]. The insula is connected to many cortical (frontal cortex, temporal and parietal lobe, or somatosensory cortices) and subcortical (hippocampus, amygdala, or thalamus) regions [72, 73]. From a functional point of view, the insula participates in the processing of viscerosomatosensory information, essential for interoception (ability to evaluate physiological activity; [74, 75]). Insula is fundamental in emotional experience and subjective feelings [75]. Emotional stimuli cause physiological changes and these bodily sensations (processed in particular by the insula) are essential to the subjective experience of emotions and decision-making [72, 76]. Through the visceral experience of emotions, the insula allows the implementation of emotional regulation strategies [77, 78]. By processing physiological information induced by the characteristics of a perceived valenced stimulus, the insula contributes to the “bottom-up” processes underlying positive emotions. On the other hand, it allows —by these connections with the frontal regions and the conscious access to visceral sensations— the cognitive processing of valenced stimuli and is involved in “top-down” processes.

4.3 Top-down influences on positive emotions

From a “top-down” perspective on positive emotion processing, high-level cortical structures have received particular attention. Perhaps the most studied region is the prefrontal cortex (PFC). In this area, the experience of positive affects is lateralized in the left PFC whereas negative affect is lateralized in the right PFC [79]. Recently, Mendez and Parand (2020) documented a clinical case of a patient who suffered significant brain injury. Following a suicide attempt by gunshot, medical imaging

examinations of this 63-year-old man showed significant volume loss of the right frontal and right anterior lobes and injury in left orbitofrontal. Clinically, this brain injury led to a significant personality change. The patient was described as permanently “happy” and scoring 28/28 on the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), despite his many sequelae and the fact that he was imprisoned [80]. This clinical case suggests that the emergence of happiness could be related to the left PFC, while the right PFC would participate in regulating a positive biased default mode [81, 82]. Similarly, studies based on electroencephalography (EEG) have shown that activation of the left PFC is associated with positive affect and activation of the right PFC with negative affect [79]. Interestingly, this activation of the left PFC does not only occur when processing positive information but is also related to dispositional mood, temperament, and well-being [83]. Left PFC being associated with dispositions toward positive emotional states, it is a good candidate for a top-down moderating process of happiness.

However, this lateralization of the PFC is far from being as strict as it may seem. Indeed, bilateral activation of the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) has been observed during hedonic processing [84]. OFC, and more specifically, the mid-anterior subregion is involved in the subjective experience of pleasure, an important component of hedonia [66, 85]. This brain region is also associated with optimism, a dispositional trait, and an optimistic explanatory style (i.e., how an individual reacts to a positive or negative event), underlying well-being [86]. OFC allows the subjective attribution of a hedonic valence to a stimulus and contributes to the emergence of judgment and hedonic-motivated decision-making [85]. Subjective access to the hedonic evaluation of a stimulus is associated with the deployment of “high-level” processing and “top-down” processes. Hornak and collaborators (2003) have shown that lesions of the OFC can cause a deficit in emotional voice or face recognition and produce changes in behavioral and subjective emotional states. Their work also emphasized the importance of the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) and its links with the OFC in human emotions [87].

Classically, ACC is considered to be recruited in attentional control tasks (i.e., tasks largely involving “top-down” processes [88, 89]). Several studies also emphasize the importance of ACC in emotional regulation mechanisms [90–92]. Brassens and collaborators (2011) suggested that ACC activation is related to an attentional bias toward positive stimuli [93]. When an individual is in a positive emotional state, this attentional bias manifests in order to preserve this state. It is a motivated behavior involved in emotional regulation. Their work has thus indicated, in an elderly sample, that an increase in the activity of ACC (more particularly in the rostral part of the ACC) is correlated with this positivity bias but also with the feeling of well-being. On the other hand, ACC is involved in compassion, a trait associated with the production of positive emotion and happiness [86]. It is accepted that dysfunction of ACC contributes to certain cases of major depression [94]. Thus, it is assumed that through attentional control directed toward positive stimuli, the ACC contributes to the regulation and maintenance of a positive emotional state and is, therefore, a key structure in the emergence of happiness [60]. Beyond specific brain areas brain networks have been studied in relation to happiness. In particular, the default mode network (DMN) has been identified as a key component for the emergence of happiness [61]. DMN consists of low-intensity activity that can be recorded when the participant is at rest; it is inhibited when they are engaged in cognitively demanding tasks and not self-oriented. This is composed of bilateral cortical area located in the frontal, parietal, and temporal lobes [95]. The DMN includes medial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate

cortex, and inferior parietal lobule [96–98]. This has a central role in the happiness experience [98]. Luo and collaborators (2016) demonstrated that increased DMN connectivity in PFC and cingulate cortex is associated with lower levels of happiness. Greater functional connectivity of the DMN is associated with more self-reflection based on negative content and ruminations leading to unhappiness [97]. These results are consistent with previous studies in the context of psychopathology [99]. Thus, when the networks involved in cognitive tasks are dominated by the DMN, there is a greater tendency to rumination and, therefore, to lower levels of happiness [100]. The default-mode network activation may interfere with positive task implementation by preventing the activation of neural networks involved in planning, preparing, and selecting appropriate behaviors [101].

4.4 Discussion

The data gathered in this section support the idea that positive emotion emergence and processing cannot be related to one single dedicated brain area. It is rather supported by a complex network involving cortical and subcortical regions. Although much progress has been made, the processes associating the activation of this network with a subjective sense of happiness remain unclear and require further research [60]. It is also necessary to avoid any simplistic shortcut consisting in considering that the activation of a key brain area in the processing of positive emotions is enough to cause a subjective feeling of happiness. Indeed, the same brain area can process emotions of different valences through different neural networks [65].

As first mentioned in the introduction of this section, the classical approach in neuroscience is to assimilate responses based on sensory or perceptual processing of stimuli with “bottom-up” processing. While cognitive processing of stimuli is associated with “top-down” processing. Thus, “bottom-up” and “top-down” processing are often associated with subcortical and cortical regions, respectively [61–63]. This view has two main limitations. On the one hand, it has been shown that tasks that are supposed to require bottom-up or top-down processing mobilize both subcortical and cortical regions [63, 73]. This element is consistent with the state of current knowledge in the field of emotions. Relatively complex processes such as hedonic evaluation of stimuli, approach behavior *via* decision-making or emotional regulation are underpinned by many cortical and subcortical areas [60, 66, 73, 77, 102]. Consequently, viewing bottom-up and top-down processes as strictly competitive or exclusive presents limitations. An approach integrating these processes in a “circular” perspective seems more coherent. Both the perceptual characteristics of the stimuli and the elements resulting from higher-level cognitive processing should be taken into account. Moreover, a significant part of work in neuroscience is based on functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This technique allows a good spatial identification of cerebral activations but is generally less adapted in studies requiring high temporal resolution, which is offered by electrophysiology. It has been reported that the cerebral processes involved in evaluating positive stimuli take place more slowly than those that involve negative stimuli [60]. Esslen and collaborators (2004) have shown that the presentation of happiness face activates the frontal regions as well as the ACC according to different temporal segments [103].

Finally, we are aware that this literature often refers to various concepts. Well-being, happiness, hedonia, positive emotions, mood, or affect can, depending on the authors, be almost interchangeable notions or refer to completely different concepts. We chose to focus on studies that tried to link positive emotions to happiness despite

differences in definitions offered or positive emotion induction protocols and measurement tools used. This does not prevent us from taking a certain distance from this literature, which has not yet succeeded in providing a strict and consensual conceptual framework. It is necessary to be aware of this element when discussing the notion of happiness in neuroscience.

In neuroscience, the importance of frontal regions in the processing of positive emotions is clearly established. These are key brain areas in emerging happiness. Beyond the processing of positive affect, they are the seat of “high-level” functions such as “executive functions.” It is therefore necessary to take an interest in these “high-level” processes in order to understand their role in the emerging happiness. Finally, work in neuroscience teaches us that positive emotions, fundamental parts of subjective feeling of happiness, are supported by a large cerebral network. This network is flexible and its activation depends on both “bottom-up” and “top-down” processes.

5. Happiness as a result of higher-order processes: evidence from psychopathology and cognitive behavioral therapy

Two main theories of happiness and higher-order cognitive processes can be found in the literature (**Figure 1**). They are associated with specific definitions of happiness. The first definition is underpinned by the *eudaimonia* theory of happiness. It defines happiness as psychological wellbeing. Psychological well-being refers to the development and realization of potential, as well as the conditions of optimal living and their effects [60]. The second definition is underpinned by the hedonic theory of happiness. It defines happiness as subjective well-being. Subjective well-being consists of both a cognitive component and an affective component [97, 104]. Cognitive component refers to cognitive evaluation of life satisfaction [104–107]. Affective component is related to the experience and maximization of positive affects and avoidance and alleviation of negative affects. Situations and events eliciting pleasure and positive affect are important in happiness emergence [104–107]. The frequency of positive experiences is a greater predictor of happiness than the intensity of the felt emotion [106]. However, such a bottom-up pathway is incomplete to explain the emergence of happiness (**Figure 2**).

5.1 Top-down involvement of higher-order processes in happiness genesis

The sustainable happiness model suggests that events are the factor associated with the smaller influence on happiness level [13, 22]. Intentional activity (*i.e.*, actions requiring some degree of effort) including cognitive activity would better account for

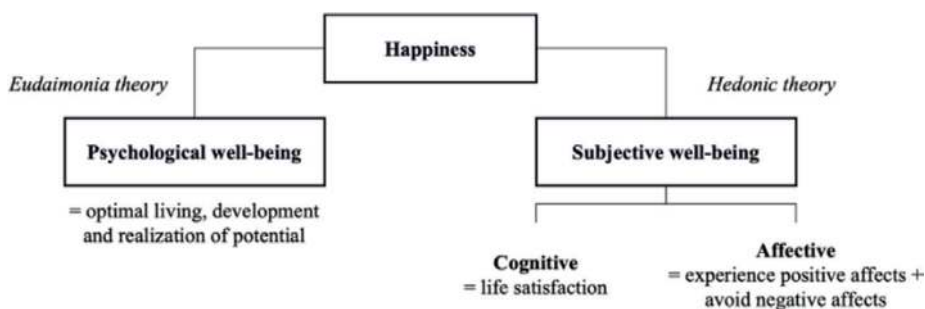


Figure 2. Definitions of happiness found in studies dealing with higher-order processes involved in happiness.

happiness variation than would circumstances [13, 22]. Happiness would be generated in a top-down manner and be a result of higher-order processes.

Events favoring happiness do not systematically lead to be happy [108]. First, La Rochefoucauld (1694/1930) wrote “happiness does not consist in things themselves but in the relish, we have of them” (p. 51; [108]). This philosophical statement is supported by the theoretical background of cognitive behavioral therapy. Situations and events do not have a valence and do not elicit positive or negative emotions *per se*. Rather, it is the cognitive interpretation of the event that elicits positive or negative emotions. Such a statement is also supported by the construal approach to happiness [109]. This top-down theory of happiness suggests that an objective event is interpreted subjectively. Cognitive processes shape the effect of events on happiness. Each individual builds their own reality, which determines specific hedonic outcomes, leading in turn to various levels of happiness. Second, individuals have to be able to perceive happiness-favoring events. Sad mood and anhedonia are core symptoms of major depressive disorder [110]. These symptoms seem to be the opposite of the effective component of happiness in the hedonic theory of happiness. Generally, individuals suffering from depressive disorder are attracted by negative information and avoid positive information [111, 112]. The incapacity to perceive events favoring happiness (also called “anhedonic bias”) could contribute to the incapacity to experience positive affects [111].

Taken together, these data suggest that happiness is the result of higher-order processes in a top-down manner before, during, and after the event. Before the event, higher-order processes can help to detect events favoring happiness. During and after the event, higher-order processes participate in the interpretation of the situation. Higher-order processes can also help to reinterpret an event in a positive manner and elicit happiness. Happy individuals would perceive, evaluate, and think a same event as more positive than unhappy individuals [109]. This section aims to provide a brief critical review of higher processes’ top-down influence on happiness. First, we examine how cognitive style participates in the happiness genesis. Following this, we summarize evidence showing that “executive functioning” plays a substantial role in happiness generation. Finally, we report that metacognitive processes also significantly contribute to happiness.

5.2 Cognitive styles

Information processing styles are associated with mood variations. We review three information processing styles involved in happiness development: the use of probability, global-local processing, and attributional style.

According to the decision affect theory, the expected value of an outcome influences the emotional experience elicited by this outcome [113, 114]. The estimated likelihood to obtain a better alternative is a determinant of happiness derived from an event. We can suppose that winning \$500 in a lottery is a happiness-favoring event. But felt happiness will certainly be lower if it is more likely to win \$5000 than \$500. Conversely, felt happiness will certainly be higher if it is more likely to win \$50 than \$500. The outcome is the same but the felt happiness is different. Children (> 4 years old) and adults inferred more happiness when the likelihood to obtain a better outcome was low rather than high [115]. Outcomes obtained could compare with a standard established from the use of probability [115]. Satisfaction would result from an outcome evaluation through a comparison process [116]. If a positive outcome is highly likely, then a high standard is established. Happiness and hedonic

load of events decrease when the outcome does not reach the expected standard. Use of probability, as a higher-order process, seems to be in happiness genesis. Especially, the use of probability has an influence on the hedonic load of a happiness-favoring event in establishing an expected outcome. Happiness genesis seems to be conditioned in a top-down manner under the influence of this expectation.

It has been often demonstrated that negative mood was associated with local information processing, whereas positive mood was often associated with global processing of information. Ji et al. (2019) have manipulated the style of perceptual processing (global *vs.* local) to investigate its role in happiness genesis. Through four experiments, this study showed that global processing leads to be happier and in a better mood than local processing [117]. Global processing would be associated with a big picture schema leading to a global perspective. Global perspective would increase the likelihood to detect a positive stimulus and would increase the likelihood to experience positive emotion. Furthermore, global processing would be associated with a more abstracting interpretation of life, regardless of current and minor worries. To summarize, global processing increases happiness level by two hypothetical top-down mechanisms: a) an expansion of attentional focus increasing the likelihood to detect positive stimuli and experience positive emotion (affective subjective well-being); b) a global view of life in which minor concerns are less salient, increasing life satisfaction (cognitive subjective well-being).

Following an event, individuals can process this event either by relating the cause to the self (internal style) or by relating the cause to an external factor to the self (external style). The style adopted is different according to mood variation and event valence. For example, internal style for negative events is a strong predictor of depressive disorder (*e.g.*, [118]). Empirical findings show that the way we attribute cause (internally or externally) of an event (positive or negative) is a determinant of happiness. Internal attributions for negative events are associated with an increase in anhedonia severity in turn associated with a decrease in happiness [119]. There is a direct negative correlation between the level of happiness and the internal attribution of negative events [119]. Internal attribution and “stable” attribution (*i.e.*, judge an event with a high likelihood to occur again) for positive events increase happiness [120]. An attributional style for negative events, in which causes are processed as less personal, less permanent, and less pervasive, improves happiness. The way we process events in term of self-involvement contributes to explaining the genesis of happiness in a top-down manner. Attributional style would be associated with personality. Extravert personality would be associated with an internal attributional style for positive events. Neurotic personality would be associated with an internal attributional style for negative events [120]. Personality influences the attributional style. The latter could in turn determine the experience of happiness in a descendant way. Lyubormisky (2001) searched for a mechanism that could explain the relationship between extraverts/neurotics and happiness/unhappiness, respectively. The attributional style could explain such a relationship. If extravert people attribute the causes of positive event to themselves, then they are more inclined to be sensitive to reward, experience positive effect, and be happy (Lyubormisky, 2001). If neurotics people attribute the causes of negative event to themselves, then they are more inclined to be sensitive to punishment, experience negative affect, and be unhappy [109].

Taken together, these findings reveal that happiness is determined in a top-down manner by the way the information is processed. Information processing seems itself associated with personality and cognitive schema. Such findings suggest that “executive functions” could be a determinant of happiness. As exposed above,

global-local processing has been hypothetically associated with attentional focus [117]. Attributional style is associated with “executive functions.” Cognitive flexibility and inhibition (important processes related to “executive functions”) are associated with internal attributions for positive events and “stable” attributions for negative events [121].

5.3 Executive processes

Depressive disorder seems to be the opposite of happiness, especially when considering depressed mood and anhedonia, which have been considered as core symptoms of depression [110]. Cognitive dysfunctions in depressive disorder support the importance of “executive functioning” in happiness. Some “executive functions” are impaired in this mood disorder [122]. Such impairments could explain the difficulty to experience positive emotion and happiness. Impairment of top-down cognitive control (the set of “executive functions” that flexibly produce goal-directed thoughts and behaviors) could be involved in negativity bias (*i.e.*, the tendency to be attracted by negative stimuli and the interpretation of neutral stimuli as negative). Inhibition and working memory difficulties would impair both the inhibition of negative representations and their update (shift from negative representations to positive ones) [122].

Happiness derived from subjective well-being could emerge from “executive functioning” [123]. Working memory is involved in subjective well-being [124]. People who are better at maintaining and updating (*i.e.*, modifying representation in working memory according to new information) positive stimuli in working memory are happiest [124]. That is they have a higher life satisfaction level (cognitive subjective well-being) and experience more positive emotion than negative emotion (affective subjective well-being). Happiness could emerge from the update of positive information. Update leads to a repetitive activation of positive information in working memory. It would be easier to access positive information and process them, leading to more positive thought eliciting happiness [124]. Concerning the cognitive component of subjective well-being, life satisfaction is associated with goal achievement. “Executive functioning” is involved in goal achievement, for example through strategic planning. Therefore, they support goal achievement, which would be a condition of happiness [123]. Although goal achievement seems to be central to happiness genesis, goal must be realistic and flexible. Sometimes, reaching happiness is an objective *per se*. However, if expected happiness is extreme (*e.g.*, individuals believe that experiencing happiness is a routine, value experience only if it generates happiness, think that there is something problematic if they do not experience happiness) and people believe that they cannot modify their emotional states, then happiness decreases [125]. This finding highlights the need for mental flexibility and the detrimental effect of rigid and unrealistic goals on happiness. “Executive functioning” could be involved in the psychological well-being component [123]. Eudaimonic pursuit of happiness involves self-control to inhibit and delay immediate reward while staying focused on higher-order goals. Working memory allows considering several action pathways to reach the goal [123].

Goal achievement seems to be very important in happiness because it is involved in psychological well-being and cognitive subjective well-being. However, there are sometimes conflicts between short-term goals leading to immediate but smaller rewards and long-term goals leading to delayed but larger benefits [126]. Such conflicts are also called self-control conflicts [126]. Self-control, notably through

“executive functioning”, would be involved when resolving this conflict [126, 127]. When individuals are motivated to pursue affective subjective well-being by imagining a pleasure-eliciting event during inhibition tasks, they activate an interfering short-term goal. Consequently, inhibition performance decreases. Self-control conflict would also involve working memory to maintain an active representation of the long-term goal [126]. Cognitive control (*i.e.*, the set of “executive functions” involved in flexibly producing goal-directed thoughts and behaviors) plays a role in meeting goals while managing conflicting pleasure-favoring distractors [60]. Cognitive control may be divided into proactive control, retroactive control, and evaluative control components. Proactive control allows guiding behavior with a strategy in order to achieve a long-term goal and positive life event. Retroactive control focuses attention toward a reward-eliciting stimulus. Evaluative control consists of monitoring and assessing outcomes of behaviors. Executive control seems important to protect long-term goals leading to happiness and to resolve self-control conflicts. Wiese et al. (2018) showed that self-control predicted subjective well-being. Self-control produces succeeding and thriving, leading themselves to happiness [123]. These long-term benefits preserve happiness because they counterbalance the inhibition of immediate pleasure. Flexibility remains important to prevent unrealistic goals that promote unhappiness. Sometimes, individuals try to stay focused on long-term goals, while enjoying present moment pleasure, to reach happiness. In this kind of situation, top-down control can contribute to reducing dissonance between immediate reward and long-term goal [123].

Executive control of selective attention seems to be a main determinant of happiness. Focusing attention on present information would promote happiness [60]. This process is associated with mental flexibility, which promotes the ability to shift attentional focus, notably on rewarding events and new opportunities [60]. Cognitive control (notably working memory, flexibility, and inhibition) has neural correlates in the executive control network [128]. Activity in executive control network is associated with subjective well-being [128]. Evidence arising from aging research supports these statements. Happiness and emotional regulation could be enhanced with aging [60]. Such an enhancement is sometimes explained by various age-related changes in cognitive processing (*e.g.*, selective attention focused more on positive information than on negative information). Such modifications of cognitive processes could consist in increased focusing on positive information in the elderly [60]. At the neurobiological level, the recruitment of prefrontal cortex is correlated with the modification of cognitive processes that enhance happiness in aging [60]. This cerebral region is included in executive control network allowing cognitive control and is associated with happiness ([128]; see also the previous section for the involvement of prefrontal cortex in top-down genesis of happiness). The role of attentional focus control is also supported by studies on rumination, mind-wandering, and dwelling. Dwelling and rumination are circular and repetitive self-reflection characterized by intrusive thoughts, images, and memories [129]. Self-reflection is negatively associated with happiness [130]. The decrease in happiness related to rumination could be explained by impairment in “executive functioning.” Self-reflection could cause an interference effect [129], monopolize and drain cognitive resources used in executive process [109, 129]. Cognitive resources would be no longer available to control attention, focus on positive stimuli, achieve goal, and solve problems through executive processes. Self-reflection could divert attentional focus from happiness-favoring events and cognitive resources would no longer be available to correct attention focus (*e.g.*, through inhibition or mental flexibility). Self-reflection induced by dwelling or

rumination is associated with the default-mode network including medial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate cortex, and inferior parietal lobule [96, 97, 128]. The previous section has shown that this cerebral network has a central role in happiness experience notably in relation to self-reflection [97, 128]. The default-mode network disturbs top-down executive processes involved in happiness.

“Executive functioning,” notably through cognitive control, including inhibition, mental flexibility, working memory, and selective attention, has an important role in happiness. Especially, intentions, goals, and expectations would induce a synchronization of “executive functioning” to realize plans and reach happiness in a top-down manner. Furthermore, individuals could try to apply some strategies to modify “executive functioning” (*e.g.*, in the case of rumination, dwelling, and mind-wandering) and enhance happiness. Metacognitive processes could be determinants of happiness. They also reinforce evidence in favor of the processes exposed above.

5.4 Metacognitive emotion regulation

We have reported that cognitive style and “executive functioning” are determinants of happiness. Individuals can use metacognitive strategies to change these cognitive processes in order to enhance happiness and alleviate negative affect. Metacognitive strategies employed to regulate emotion (*i.e.*, efforts to modify emotional response [130]) can be considered higher-order determinants of happiness.

Cognitive reappraisal is a metacognitive strategy involved in happiness genesis. It contributes to modifying the interpretation of an event, by proposing a new meaning. Therefore, it allows reinterpreting a situation as being source of pleasure in a top-down manner. This new perception of the pleasant activity increases subjective well-being [130]. Cognitive reappraisal can be used to produce a more optimistic interpretation of future, which increases the experience of positive emotion. Cognitive reappraisal is also useful to reassess the attributional style, which influences happiness [108]. We have discussed above the top-down involvement of attributional style in happiness. Individuals could also reappraise the perceived value of a situation: they experience more positive affect for things with higher value [108]. Cognitive reappraisal involvement in happiness is supported by mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). MBCT practice increases the level of happiness (psychological and subjective well-being; [131]). MBCT practice would broaden the identification of experiences enhancing life satisfaction (cognitive subjective well-being). Cognitive reappraisal would allow reevaluating experience as positive, which increases the experience of positive emotion (affective subjective well-being; [131]). The improvement of eudaimonic well-being is explained by the enhancement of subjective well-being that is associated with the meaning of life. This study also suggests the involvement of attentional processes to broaden the attentional focus that identifies events [131].

Attentional deployment (*i.e.*, the way individuals direct their attention; [108]) can be related to metacognitive emotional regulation strategies that influence happiness too. Attentional deployment could increase the experience of positive emotion and happiness by mentally simulating positive events and increasing the saliency of present moments and positive autobiographical memories [108]. Exercises derived from positive psychology suggest that reporting early and recent autobiographical memories increases happiness [132]. Such “positive” exercises could be underpinned by attentional deployment strategy. Mindfulness, including the focus of attention on the present moment, would improve cognitive control and contribute to alter the

default-mode network. The decrease in the activity of the default-mode network associated with mindfulness could explain the attenuation of rumination [96]. Considering, the negative relationship between rumination and happiness, the attenuation of rumination associated with mindfulness could increase happiness.

Cognitive reappraisal and attentional deployment are also both metacognitive strategies that could participate in enhancing self-control and increasing happiness. For example, attentional deployment may serve to avoid immediate temptation and stay focused on long-term goals [133].

Cognitive reappraisal and attentional deployment are both top-down determinants of happiness. They play a critical role in influencing cognitive processes toward enhancing happiness.

5.5 Discussion

The goal of this section was to provide a brief critical review of higher-order processes as top-down influencers of happiness. We have reported findings supporting the top-down influence of several higher-order processes (*e.g.*, cognitive style, cognitive control and “executive functions” and metacognitive strategies) over happiness. At this point of our review, we propose to distinguish between two levels of top-down processes involved in happiness dynamics (**Figure 3**). The first level includes cognitive style (*e.g.*, use of probability, Global-Local processing, attributional style) and “executive functioning.” The second level of higher-order processes is represented by metacognition, personality, intentions, and goals influencing cognitive processes belonging to the first level of higher-order processes.

Critically, although some experiments have manipulated factors that could influence happiness, numerous other studies are “correlational” in nature. Even when top-down influence could be involved, the influence of bottom-up processes on higher-order processes cannot be excluded. Sometimes, it is difficult to know what is the cause and what is the consequence [109]. A novel pathway of happiness genesis based on a bidirectional influence from bottom-up and top-down processes should be carefully considered.

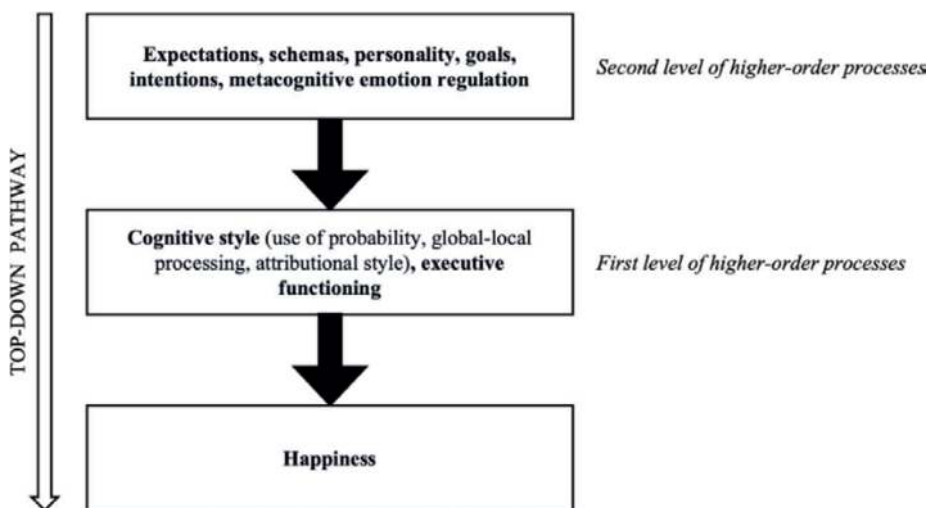


Figure 3. Top-down pathway leading to happiness.

6. Epilogue. Enacting happiness: between emergence and integration

6.1 Toward a clearer terminology

Our review on happiness has gathered studies referring to various disciplines. One of the most striking facts is the lack of common theoretical constructs regarding what has been meant by “happiness” across research reports (including within disciplines). Spanning from basic emotion to *eudaimonia*, the “happiness” notion seems to be difficult to characterize and scientifically study.

The conceptual ambiguity identified is close to that already observed between emotion and mood [134–135], as if the effective processes were difficult to refer through a unified approach. We propose that this state of affairs is related to i) the similar nature of affective processes that are associated with (positive or negative) valence evaluation whatever the level of processing and ii) the lack of integration of affective processes throughout the spectrum of bottom-up and top-down processing. In the following lines, we consider how this integration could be facilitated and we envisage a few regulatory processes of happiness.

6.2 Time and inertia: an affective momentum?

The different sections of this review have illustrated two main principles. First, bottom-up and top-down processing can be thought of as different levels of processing and/or different information processing pathways. Second, both levels and pathways are required to understand how happiness is enacted. Bottom-up processing creates the “inputs” for subjective well-being (both at “affective” and “cognitive”² levels) as well as for *eudaimonia* or “psychological well-being.”³ Complementarily, top-down processes create a mindset to guide attention, interpret incoming information, reappraise the situation, and compare the state of affairs with expectations. Each level of processing and each pathway is supported by corresponding biological structures (among which PFC represents a highly integrative hub).

We suggest that time, cognitive inertia, and increasing resonance all feature the processes that transform several initial affective events into the materials of, and conditions for, happiness. In our opinion, differentiating emotion, mood and happiness cannot be adequately realized without taking into account time dimension. Emotion, mood, and happiness (the latter here considered as *eudaimonia*) would consist in increasingly abstract and long cycles of subjective experience made of some form of summing of experience cycles pertaining to a lower level (*e.g.*, several cycles of emotions for mood, several cycles of mood for happiness). This “resonance” principle (see also [136]) could be the basis for bottom-up moderation of *eudaimonia*. Iterative microcycles of effective experience could be integrated, generating an affective “momentum,” the basis for subjective well-being, and the content for interpretative cognition leading to *eudaimonia*. This bottom-up route is coordinated with the top-down one. Each step of resonance at a higher level of integration (*e.g.*, from mood to *eudaimonia*) could involve top-down structuration of information, such that apart from the initial affective content that is taken into account, the abstraction process

² Note that we use here the prevalent terminology, though in our view, there is cognition in effective processing and effects in cognition.

³ In the same vein, psychological well-being dissociated from subjective well-being may logically be questioned. This discussion, however, falls out of the scope of this chapter.

of affective experience is dependent on attentional deployment (large or focused), comparison (or not) with previous expectations (etc.). The two “access doors” to happiness are then related to personal events and associated affective experience on the one hand, and to the ability to organize a nurturing mindset on the other hand.

6.3 Action, frequency, and variety: from bottom-up to top-down and the other way round

“*Hoping less and acting more*” is sometimes a conclusion of philosophical reasoning on happiness [1]. Action is a condition of control over our life and adaptive behavior. The data reported in this chapter also indicate that freeing cognitive resources for action is important for happiness. The analyses mentioned in this chapter concerning brain default mode network suggest that self-oriented thought and rumination interfere with cognitive performance and positive affective experience. Affective regulation is costly. It removes resources that become unavailable for successful goal-directed behavior [137] and can undermine our perception of action opportunities [138]. Perceiving less opportunity for action could then be deleterious for effective action and for a global feeling of achievement and potential realization. Top-down pathways to happiness can be taken into account to prevent the consequences of nonrealistic expectations, broaden one’s standpoint on life experience, and reappraise situations. The education of brain, cognition, and behavior could contribute to help individuals develop strategies namely supported by frontal brain areas, and aiming at i) organizing the conditions of positive experience (e.g., frequency and variety of positive events), and ii) focusing activity on action rather than on hopes.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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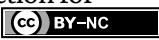
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Chapter 9

Predictors of Child Well-Being or What Makes Children Happy

Zhanna Bruk and Svetlana Ignatjeva

Abstract

In order to understand what makes children happy, it is important to hear what children have to say about their lives themselves. Their voices do not always resonate with the widespread discourse of adults about what children need, and the very awareness of children's well-being diverges between adults and children. This chapter presents an analysis of overall life satisfaction and subjective well-being of 2,000 children living in the Tyumen region, Russia. The survey was conducted as part of the international collaboration Children's Worlds (ISCWeB). The authors study the influence of various predictors (family, friends, school, safety, area of residence, etc.) on the subjective well-being of children. The results prove that the objective availability of everything necessary for a full-fledged life of a child does not always determine subjective well-being and a sense of happiness. Children may have not everything they want and still be happy. Conversely, a child may claim to have everything a child could dream of and still feel unhappy. These results are discussed in the context of policy and programming to promote and sustain well-being among all children.

Keywords: well-being of children, subjective well-being, emotional component, cognitive component, factor analysis, cluster analysis

1. Introduction

1.1 A case "About the girl Eva"

My colleague, who runs a private educational center, shared this story with me. She and her daughter teach English to children and help correct speech disorders. They have a 12-year-old English language student, let us call her Eva. Eva has a nuclear family with prosperous young parents. Her father works, and her mother is engaged in raising children. The family is financially very well off and lives in a large two-level apartment. Eva has five more brothers. All children attend additional classes outside of school, some of which require additional fees. Parents can afford it. Eva goes to school in the afternoon and spends her morning taking additional classes, including English.

Is the girl happy? We can assume, with a very high probability, that yes, she is happy. Eva has everything and even more than is necessary for a prosperous life: a large family, a house and comfortable living conditions, siblings, parents and their care, a good school near her house, friends, material security with everything necessary, the possibility of comprehensive development and visiting numerous

institutions of additional education for children ... In general, parents try to give their children the maximum and do everything in their power to make the children happy.

2. Theoretical overview

Children's perspectives on their behavior, health, well-being, and other aspects of their lives differ from those of adults – teachers and parents – and are a valuable source of information about how settings, such as school, home, and community, can improve children's well-being and quality of life. The very understanding of children's well-being by adults and the understanding of their well-being by children themselves diverge. Based on this, some researchers propose the idea of special “cultures of childhood,” which are not limited to the scheme of “development in interaction with adults,” but are built on their own initiative, opinions, views of children, and their informal communication” [1].

Subjective well-being in research does not only mean happiness, satisfaction with one's own life, and achievement of goals, but also the absence of negative feelings, ideal physical and mental well-being, safety, and sufficiency of resources [2]. Bradburn believed that subjective well-being is the relationship between positive and negative affects, which as a result give a person a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their own life. Bradburn created a model of the structure of subjective well-being, which was based on the balance of diverse affects – positive and negative. A follower of Bradburn and a representative of the hedonistic approach was Ed. Diener, who created a theoretical basis for the study of subjective well-being, is recognized as the “gold standard” in the study of psychological well-being, where special attention is paid to the cognitive and emotional assessment of life satisfaction, that is, the degree of experiencing happiness (the ratio of positive and negative affect) [3, 4]. A cognitive component includes a general intellectual assessment of a person's satisfaction with various areas of their life, that is, to what extent a person's life satisfies their individual expectations. The emotional component of subjective well-being is considered the long-term frequency of positive or negative impact, that is, experiencing a bad or good mood. Diener believes that each person individually relates this or that event to the concept of “good” or “bad,” each of which carries a certain emotional response.

Arkhireeva regards the subjective well-being of the child as a system of experiences that reflect the child's ideas and impressions about their place in the “environment — child” system. The structure of the subjective well-being of a primary student, according to the researcher, includes:

- a. “emotional well-being;
- b. cognitive-evaluative component of well-being, consisting of:
 1. satisfaction with relationships with parents, the teacher, and peers;
 2. satisfaction with success in educational activities;
- c. assessment of the ability to organize and manage one's life;
- d. optimism in assessing the prospects for a future life” [5].

According to Eliseeva, subjective well-being includes two main components:

1. Cognitive (a person's idea of certain aspects of their life);
2. Emotional (human experience associated with the successful or unsuccessful functioning of the individual) [6, 7].

Well-being is a subjective matter considering that every person and child have their own perception of it. Our study corroborates this thesis. Additionally, in different periods of time, one acquires new priorities, values, necessities, and desires, and it is their fulfillment that defines one's life satisfaction.

Every parent tries to create a better childhood for their offspring, guided by their own views. Nonetheless, their understanding of a better childhood may not correspond with that of the child themselves. For example, for a child brought up in an orphanage, the highest degree of happiness is to have a family; for a child with physical disabilities to become healthy and play outside with their peers; and a healthy child in an ordinary family dreams of a new pricy gadget. A child from a big family may dream of a separate bedroom, their own space and privacy.

Well-being and happiness are closely connected notions. However, there are certain differences. On the one hand, well-being is a more scientific term, while the notion of happiness is often used in the ordinary life. On the other hand, there is a difference in the definitions of the terms. Well-being is a more stable state; it is an individual's assessment of their own life, its quality, and the satisfaction with various aspects of life on the cognitive and emotional levels. Happiness has more to do with one's emotions; it is a state of excitement and euphoria deriving from the accomplishment of certain goals. Unlike well-being, happiness is a more fleeting state. Human psyche is incapable of experiencing euphoria for a long time. People are constantly striving for improvement and for something new; therefore, something that caused the sensation of absolute happiness one day can feel ordinary the next day.

3. Study

3.1 Project and sample

The study presented in the chapter was conducted as part of the unique International Survey of Children's Well-Being – Children's Worlds (ISCWeB, <https://isciweb.org/>), which today involves more than 40 countries around the world. The project has existed for more than 10 years, during which three waves of data collection have been completed. The mission of the project is to collect representative data on children's lives and daily activities, their pastimes, and their perception of their well-being in as many countries as possible in order to raise awareness and improve the well-being of children and their lives.

The organizers and participants of the project called for the voices of children themselves to be heard, giving children the opportunity to express their views on various aspects of their lives and well-being, because "in an era of information, it is surprising to discover how little we know about the state of our children" [8, 9].

Researchers from more than 40 countries are currently participating in the project. The third wave of the project (2016—2019) involved scientists from 35 countries from four continents, who analyzed the performance of more than 128,000 children

of three age groups – 8, 10, and 12 years old [10]. Russia first joined the project in 2016, presenting the results of the well-being of 10- and 12-year-old children from the Tyumen region. The Tyumen region is the largest region and ranks 3rd among all the subjects of the Russian Federation. In recent years, the Tyumen region has consistently been included in the list of leading regions in the country in terms of the level and quality of life. Accordingly, the results of the presented study do not reflect the general picture of the subjective well-being of children in the country as a whole.

In total, 1904 children from 24 schools, nine cities, and five rural settlements took part in the study in the Tyumen region. The study sample consisted of 953 10-year-old children: 437 (45.9%) boys, 516 (54.1%) girls; and 951 12-year-old children: 478 (50.5%) boys, 473 (49.7%) girls. In the total sample of two age groups, boys comprise 48.1% (N = 915) and girls 51.9% (N = 989).

3.2 Research methodology

The presented study was carried out between January and May 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

To implement the study, questionnaires from the Children's Worlds project (ISCWeB) were used. Questionnaires covered topics, such as family and people with whom children live; money and property; friends; area of residence; school and bullying; pastime; children's rights; views and satisfaction with oneself, one's life and one's future. Questionnaires included questions about the frequency of classes, a scale of life satisfaction in general and specific areas or factors, a scale of agreement with status and events, and socio-demographic characteristics (<https://iscweb.org/the-questionnaire/>). The questionnaires were translated into Russian using reverse and direct techniques, tested with a focus group for each age group.

The following Children's Worlds project scales were used to process the results.

Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale (CW-SWBS) – 6 items measuring cognitive subjective well-being (Based on the Student Life Satisfaction Scale by Huebner, 1994) [11].

The children were to rate the statements on the scale from 0 (Not at all agree) to 10 (Totally agree): Now please say how much you agree with each of the following sentences about your life as a whole: My life is going well, I have a good life, The things that happen in my life are excellent, I like my life, I am happy with my life.

OLS (Overall Life Satisfaction) – One question about satisfaction with life as a whole (from 0 = Not at all satisfied to 10 = totally satisfied).

Data analysis conducted within the research consisted of such stages as the text tool set, investigative analysis allowing us to formulate the hypotheses, and the hypothesis proofs themselves. The questionnaire adaptation included factor structure analysis, analysis of the feasibility of indicators that reflect the level and structure of the respondents' subjective well-being. The process of proving the hypotheses was carried out via the following statistical criteria: Student Criterion (t-test), single-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA), and correlation analysis. Two-step cluster analysis allowed us to single out respondent groups homogeneous in relation to the phenomenon under consideration.

For statistical data analysis and presentation of research results, the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software package, version 23.0 for Windows, was used.

4. Results

4.1 Relationship between subjective well-being of children and objective indicators that ensure children's well-being

UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) has compiled a ranking of child well-being in wealthy European countries. The center's specialists wanted to understand how the financial situation of families with children in such countries affects the education and health of children, as well as their overall satisfaction with life. The study has found that, in general, the most suitable countries for children are the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. At the same time, many of the richest countries in the world, having the resources necessary to ensure a happy childhood for all children, do not really live up to expectations [12].

Results of the Children's Worlds project generally confirm the given conclusion. **Figure 1** shows the relationship between the country's GDP (gross domestic product) and the level of subjective well-being of children. Children in such economically developed countries as Spain, Norway, and Switzerland estimate the level of subjective well-being higher than the average for the population, but there is no close relationship between the level of GDP per capita and the level of subjective well-being of children. In rich countries, the situation of children is by no means always better than in the countries where the economic situation is less favorable. Thus, according

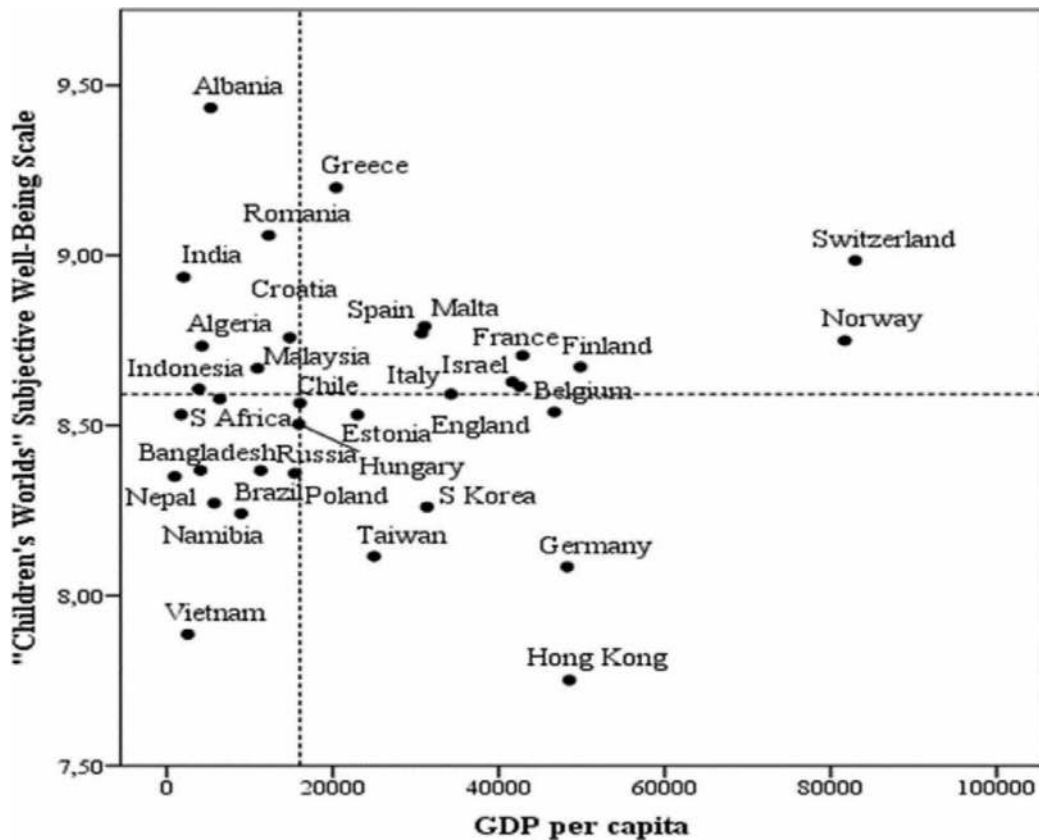


Figure 1. Scatterplot of countries in terms of GDP and subjective well-being of children.

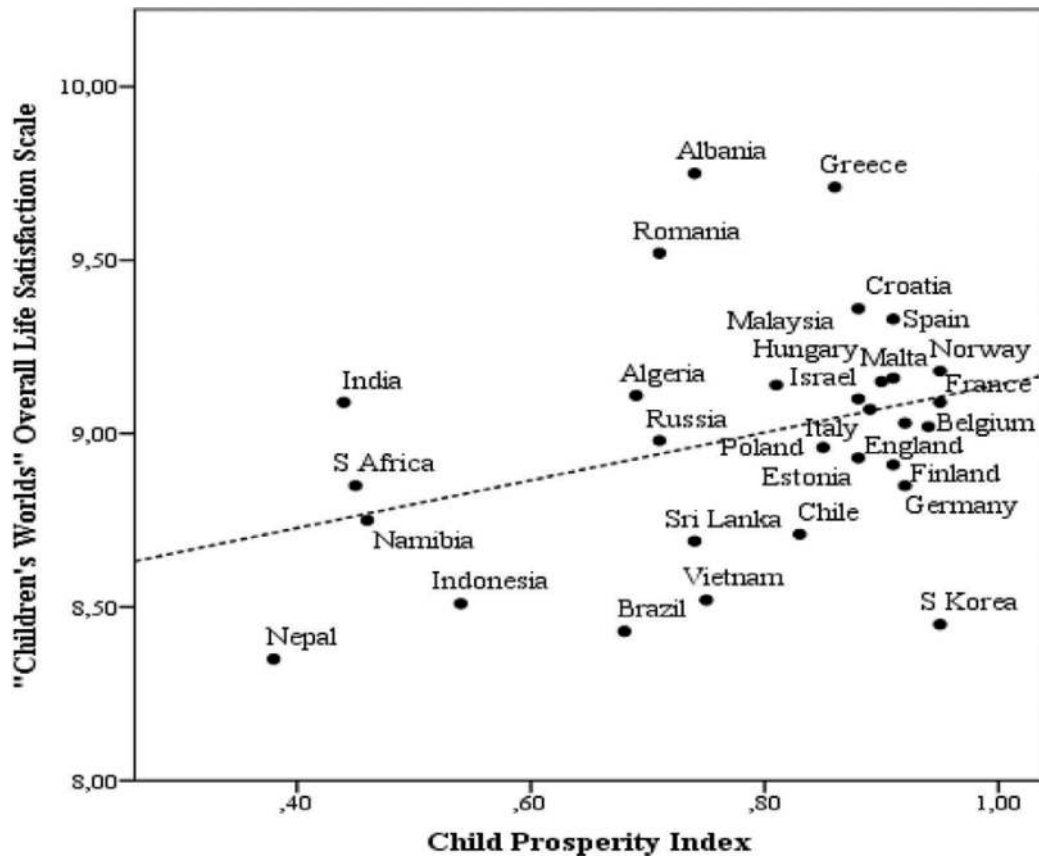


Figure 2. Scatterplot showing the relationship between Child Prosperity Index and overall life satisfaction.

to the results of the project, children in Albania are happier than their peers in Germany, and children in India are happier than in Finland.

The commission convened by the WHO (World Health Organization), UNICEF, and The Lancet has created a ranking of countries on the basis of the Child Prosperity Index (Figure 2). It considers the following parameters: child survival and well-being rate, education and nutrition, income level, and environmental conditions. There is a straight and steady correlation between the Child Prosperity Index and children's general satisfaction. Furthermore, if we consider that the Child Prosperity Index represents the factors that are the basis of general life satisfaction, then such countries as Albania, Greece, Romania, and India use these factors with a higher efficiency than the other countries.

4.2 Cognitive and emotional components of the subjective well-being of children

In our present study, we consider, on the one hand, how positively a child evaluates themselves and their life in general (cognitive or cognitive-evaluative component); and, on the other hand, how competent the child is in relation with the environment, is aware of themselves in the context of relations with other people and society as a whole, feels harmony with the world, is prosperous in these relations with the world and with themselves, and is happy (emotional component). The focus is on awareness – understanding happiness and what it means to be happy, from the perspective of a child.

Indicators of subjective well-being		K1	K2
Emotional component (K1)	I am happy with my life	,942	
	The things that happen in my life are excellent	,934	
	I like my life	,930	
	I have a good life	,928	
	My life is going well	,891	
	Satisfaction with: What may happen to you later in your life	,715	
Cognitive component (K2)	Satisfaction with: All the things you have		,837
	Satisfaction with: The people you live with		,821
	Satisfaction with: The house or flat where you live		,777
	Satisfaction with: Your friends		,671
	Satisfaction with: Your life as a student		,655
	Satisfaction with: The way that you look		,620

Table 1.
Indicators and factor loadings of the subjective well-being components.

As a result of factor analysis, a two-factor structure of the subjective well-being of children was obtained (**Table 1**).

The first of the identified factors, which is called the emotional component, practically coincides with the Children’s Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale in terms of the composition of indicators [11]. This factor also includes such indicators as “Satisfaction with: What may happen to you later in your life.” The cumulative percentage of variance explained by this factor is 52%.

The emotional component is characterized as a subjective feeling of satisfaction with oneself and one’s own life, a subjective experience associated with the values of life and the system of the child’s emotionally colored assessments. This component includes an assessment of how happy the child is in life, as well as satisfaction with possible future prospects – what can happen in life in the future.

The highest factor loadings in relation to the emotional component have such indicators as “I am happy with my life,” “The things that happen in my life are excellent,” “I like my life,” “I have a good life.” There are direct significant strong correlations between all these indicators.

Pearson’s correlation coefficient ranges from 0.819 between “I like my life” and “My life is going well” to 0.922 between “I like my life” and “I am happy with my life.” According to the Student’s criterion for dependent samples, there are no statistically significant differences in the quantitative assessment of these indicators.

The second factor, the cognitive (cognitive–evaluative) component, includes components of the Children’s Worlds scale of basic cognitive values and indicators such as “Satisfaction with: All the things you have, the people you live with, the house or flat where you live.” The cumulative percentage of variance explained by this factor is 26%. The greatest factor loading in relation to this factor is shown by such indicators as “Satisfaction with: All the things you have,” “Satisfaction with: The people you live with.”

In contrast to the emotional component, the cognitive one reveals the specific relationship of the child to the actual phenomena (surrounding things, objects, close

people, etc.). The cognitive component reveals awareness of oneself in the context of interaction with others and society as a whole.

There are direct significant correlations between the emotional and cognitive components and such indicators as “Overall Subjective Well-Being,” “Positive and Negative Affects Scale,” “Psychological Subjective Well-Being.” The closest relationship was noted between the emotional component and Psychological Subjective Well-Being.

The emotional component in the structure of subjective well-being is a tool by which a child is able to concentrate their consciousness on themselves and their inner world.

A two-stage cluster analysis in the context of the selected components of subjective well-being made it possible to group children into three clusters that are homogeneous in relation to the phenomenon under consideration.

The first cluster includes 63.8% of respondents. Both factors of subjective well-being are higher than the average for the general population. Between the components, there is a direct significant correlation of the average strength (Pearson’s correlation coefficient, $R = 0.509$).

The second cluster includes 24.1% of respondents. The cognitive component is higher than the population average; the emotional component is below the population average. There is an inverse significant correlation between the components ($R = -0.315$).

The third cluster includes 12.1% of respondents. The cognitive component is lower than the population average; the emotional component corresponds to the population average. There is a direct significant correlation between the components ($R = 0.545$).

A qualitative interpretation of the statistical data obtained, taking into account the cognitive and emotional components of subjective well-being, made it possible to distribute the children into groups, in the context of the identified three clusters (Figure 3).

The first group: “happy” – children with a level of satisfaction with life above the average. They are pleased with themselves; the house in which they live, their

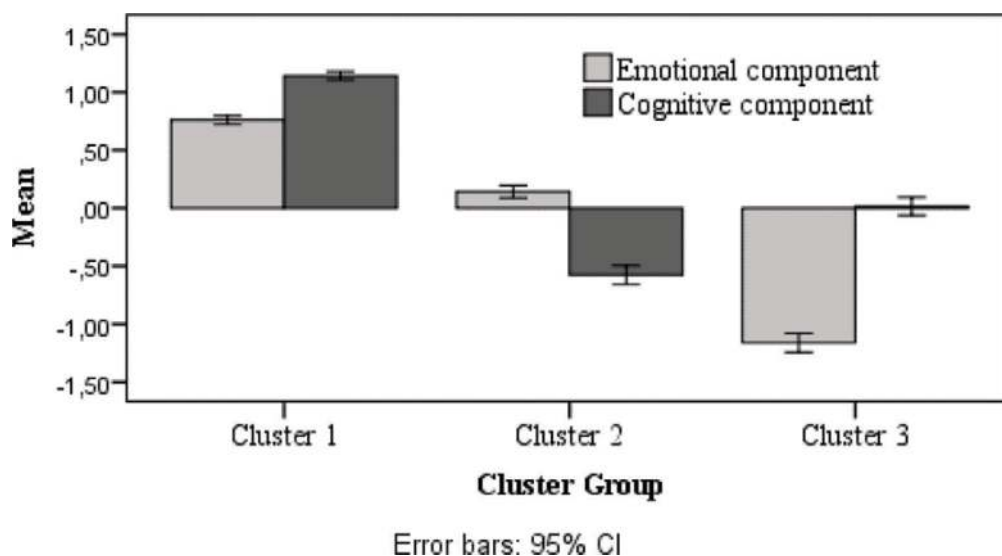


Figure 3. Distribution of children into the cluster groups.

things; school life and acquired knowledge; communicating with the people around them – relatives and friends, teachers and classmates – gives them joy. Teachers at school and relatives at home show, in their opinion, care for them. That is, on the one hand, these children cognitively appreciate everything that they have in life; on the other hand, they are satisfied with their lives, they experience pleasure and happiness, and these children are prosperous.

The second group: “relatively happy” – these are children, on the one hand, evaluating their life as “prosperous” and feeling happy; on the other hand, they are cognitively not completely satisfied with what they have – indicators of the cognitive component are below average. In our opinion, it is these children who know how to be happy in the proposed life circumstances, appreciate and know how to enjoy what they have, while noting that they would like more.

The third group: **“relatively unhappy”** – children falling into a special **“risk group.”** On the one hand, these children state that they practically do not need anything: they have relatives and friends at home, teachers at school to take care of them; there are friends they can ask for help from in case of problems. On the other hand, these children assess their lives as “unsatisfactory” and do not feel happy. In this case, material security does not lead to happiness.

Thus, the objective availability of everything necessary for a full-fledged life of a child does not always determine the subjective well-being and feeling of happiness.

4.3 Subjective well-being of children in international comparison

With an average score of 8.48 on the Scale of Subjective Well-being, Russia (the Tyumen Region) ranked 26th out of 35 countries participating in the third wave of the Children’s World study. Lower positions in the list are occupied, among other things, by some European countries such as Estonia, Germany, and Wales. Interestingly, Hong Kong (one of the leading global cities and financial centers of the world) closes this list. And children from Albania consider themselves the happiest – the biggest mystery of the current wave of research, both for the team of project organizers and for all participants. The top lines are occupied, among others, by India, Sri Lanka, and Algeria [10].

4.4 Child well-being and family

Children’s general life satisfaction and subjective well-being are predictably most closely linked to their family satisfaction and the frequency of family events. These data are supported by numerous studies by Russian and international colleagues [13, 14].

In the Tyumen region, 89.2% of child respondents gave their satisfaction with the people they live with 7 points out of 10 and more. Sixty percent of children are absolutely happy in their families (10 points out of 10). Thus, the majority of children are happy with their relatives, girls being more satisfied with their family (9.23) than boys (8.91). It should be noted that in 12 out of 30 countries surveying children aged 10 and 12, including Russia, family satisfaction is significantly decreased within the age of 10 to 12 years old [13–16].

Nonetheless, all the respondents mention that their parents do not always listen to them and take their words into account. For the children of both age groups, general life satisfaction most strongly correlates with such an indicator of family satisfaction

as “*My parents listen to me and pay attention to what I say.*” There is a straight and statistically significant relationship between these aspects, more so in the 12-year-old age group.

The most low-rated indicator is “*My parents and I make decisions about my life together.*” There is no marked difference between 10- and 12-year-old children in evaluating this statement. In the international context, the statement concerning the children’s participation in making decisions about their life is the most opposed one. Efim Arkin’s observation that “parents get involved in their children’s life too often, yet unfortunately very rarely take interest in it” is of relevance in this case.

5. Case “About the girl Eva”

One day my colleague noted that despite it being only morning, Eva looked very tired, unemotional and had trouble concentrating on work. And this is considering she had school later in the day.

“Why are you so tired?” she asked Eva.

“This morning, I’ve already had a swimming session in the pool and had a music class,” she replied.

“When?! How did you manage?” asked the English teacher, surprised. - “What else are you doing apart from school?”

Eva started naming her classes, “English, German and French, the pool, art classes...” Not quite finishing the list, the girl broke down in tears.

It was heart-wrenching to see. How should a little girl find energy for all those classes?

One can only wonder what Eva would reply if she were asked, “are you happy?”, “are you satisfied with your life?”, “do you like your life?” It is unlikely that she would answer «yes». It is interesting to think which of the cluster groups Eva would fall into.

6. Conclusion

Subjective well-being is an indispensable component of the individual’s general well-being. It is reasonable to consider the subjective well-being of a child in a broad context and from different perspectives: first of all, by studying the available social indicators (income, poverty, infant mortality, level and quality of education, etc.) and secondly, by finding out what children themselves say of their life and life satisfaction.

The subjective well-being assessment should include the evaluation of outer objective factors determining the child’s living conditions (family structure, financial well-being, place and conditions of living, health characteristics, education, etc.). However, it would be most vital to evaluate the child’s subjective assessment of their life and establish whether these features may indeed serve as indicators of children’s well-being. For this reason, the children should become the main participants of the research.

Children themselves should not be overlooked while assessing the markers of subjective well-being. The objective presence of everything required for a full-quality life may not always determine subjective well-being and the feeling of happiness.

Therefore, although necessary, addressing social issues and deficiencies will always remain a partial answer to the question of what makes children happy.

How to improve children's well-being? What can be done by parents and teachers to make children happy?

First of all, one should love and accept them unconditionally, just for their existence, without taking into account their school accomplishments and other attainments. One needs to tell them about it. Such phrases as "I love you!," "I am proud of you!," or "You are so pretty!," are necessary for every child to hear. One needs to talk to children, listen to and hear them. While making decisions that influence the children's life, it is advisable to ask for their opinion and encourage children's participation in family decision-making. Spending time with one's children makes the child happy. For example, it is possible to discuss the child's day during dinner, take walks together, or watch favorite cartoons.

At the same time, it is vital not to cross the boundary and become overbearing, not to suffocate the child with love, total attention, and control. While being preoccupied with the child's development in many spheres, it is still necessary to mind the child's health and mood. For instance, Eva's parents should finally ask her what she herself would like to do.

Parents are the best example for their children. Happy and accomplished parents bring up happy children. That is why it may be beneficial if parents are involved in events and projects organized by schools, cities, etc. where children could take part in various activities together with their families. It is in such situations that children are at happy and most proud of their parents.

It is vital to educate children, parents, and teachers socially and emotionally. The contemporary generation of children, Gen Z, has difficulty communicating and displaying emotions. It is important to teach children to understand emotions – their own and those of other people, understand why they feel particular emotions, develop positive thinking skills. The ability to create and maintain healthy relationships and constructively resolve conflicts are the pivotal life skills essential for every child.

We should also develop children's resilience, thus preparing them for real adult life. Psychological counseling is necessary for the children that find themselves in difficult life circumstances.

From the position of science, we should continue to research the factors defining child well-being in order to establish the right social politics in relation to children, family, and schools.

Children are one of life's greatest gifts — but raising caring, happy children in this modern world can be a challenge to any parent.

*Tim Seldin,
President of The Montessori Foundation and Chair
of The International Montessori Council*

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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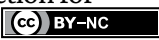
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Nondual Well-Being - The Evolution of Happiness

Patrick Jones

Abstract

In the last fifty years there has been a growing scientific interest in what makes up happiness. Life areas such as relationships, work, or money were investigated however it was found that they only partially predicted happiness. More subjective factors such as cognition and affect were explored, and the term subjective well-being (SWB) became popular. However, because SWB was based on fluctuating mental states and changing life conditions, it was always unstable, and on average people reported themselves mostly happy but not completely happy. In response we ask what it takes to be fully happy. This chapter explores the possibility of whether happiness can be a stable attribute of a fully functional human being. We turn to traditional mindfulness and the ancient wisdom traditions who assert we can achieve lasting happiness and ask what are the psychological mechanisms that can be drawn from them. Their claim that the sense of self is constructed and responsible for the fluctuations in happiness is explored, and a model of robust happiness is considered.

Keywords: happiness, nondual well-being, subjective well-being, quality of life, mindfulness

1. Introduction

Serious research into happiness only began in the 1970s. Major life areas such as relationships, work, money, health, and leisure were explored along with a plethora of minor ones [1]. However, as the research developed it became clear that happiness and its causes was very elusive. Researchers found that the life areas that made a difference only made up a small percentage of happiness ranging from 5 to 8% [1, 2] up to 15% [3]. This led researchers to see that life circumstances had a counter-intuitively small impact. And the reason for this was that happiness was more influenced by mental factors.

Researchers began to move their emphasis to more subjective processes like cognition and affect [4]. Over time the consensus was that happiness was a compound of objective conditions and subjective processes [5]. The term subjective well-being (SWB) assumed popularity [6], and included the role of emotions, and a range of mental or cognitive processes that evaluated life conditions to deliver satisfaction with one's life [7].

The way that people regulated their happiness was seen to be an inbuilt biological mechanism that responded to challenging events. For example, theories like adaptation level theory [8], the hedonic treadmill model [9], and the Dynamic Equilibrium Model [10], attempted to explain that people can maintain a relatively stable level of well-being, by adapting to distressing events so they can return to their previous levels of happiness [11].

Happiness was seen to be under a type of homeostatic control, but within a set-point, that made sure that people mostly return to their previous view of themselves and their lives [12]. When life events have an impact [13], it seems like we have an autonomous self-regulating system of internal buffers (e.g., reframing), and external buffers (e.g., social support) that kick in and recalibrate us back to baseline [14].

However, when people are asked how satisfied they are with their life, people generally report themselves to be only three-quarters satisfied [15]. Whilst of course there is a range, it is curious why the typical approach to happiness only delivers a partially satisfied outcome. Hence in view of the research that interventions can impact happiness [16], we ask are there any approaches that deliver a fully satisfied result. That is, could people increase their self-reported happiness beyond the 75% norm, up to 100% satisfied.

This chapter explores whether happiness can be an unchanging attribute of a fully functional human being. For some reason this inquiry is missed in the research focus, and instead the bar is lowered to focus more on topics like how to build resilience and strengthen adaptation to crisis. Whilst building and maintaining mental health should be a key concern in clinical research, it is somewhat surprising that there is a comparative paucity of research into the upper end of well-being. Is it because the dominant paradigm currently does not have any viable concepts or methodologies that could deliver a 100% satisfied human being?

This concern is shared by some authors who criticise the limited parameters of the dominant models of happiness. For example, Vittersø [17] asserts that the conventional evaluation of subjective well-being (SWB) misses important dimensions such as openness, growth, and indeed self-actualisation. It is reasonable to ask why, in the dominant models in psychological research, we cannot find a construct of happiness that includes the full continuum from fluctuating to stable and uninterrupted well-being. To not address this may be to leave us with a less than optimal paradigm that misses the fullness of human potential.

This new discussion addresses a possible gap in the well-being literature – whether it is possible to experience SWB, or more commonly happiness, that does not fluctuate in response to life changes. As such we define happiness as the experience of well-being that does not fluctuate in response to changing life conditions. That is can someone not just develop resilience to fluctuating life conditions but can also transcend these and be happy for no reason. Like Aristotle's argument that all things have a function, and their meaning is found in the full expression of that function [18], when we are fully happy, could that be when we find our meaning?

Should we be content with partial happiness if we have potential for more. And if so, what is the upper end of human potential when it comes to happiness? Is it in fact possible that the type of enduring well-being that we are looking at may be able to transcend its relationship to life conditions, rather than be derived from them? If so, what could uninterrupted or fully satisfied happiness look like, and what are the mechanisms for its achievement?

To expand our current model of happiness, we would benefit from taking a multi-disciplinary approach that offers new vantage points [19]. One such avenue is the very

exploration of the paradigms that argue for the nondual or enlightened states, as it is these methodologies that propose that they can deliver uninterrupted well-being or happiness that transcends the status of our life conditions.

For example, if we turn to the mindfulness field that has attracted much attention in recent years, we find that its source, traditional mindfulness, and its paradigm of enlightenment, argues for the possibility of uninterrupted happiness [20]. It maintains, however, that the sense of a self that is core in psychological theory, is in fact the very thing responsible for such fluctuations in well-being. It argues that it is unnecessarily constructed, and when it misidentifies with the biological drives to minimise pain and maximise pleasure, it becomes at the mercy of our fluctuating life conditions. As they rise and fall, so too does our happiness.

By contrast enlightenment is a dissolving of the sense of self that misidentifies with impermanent phenomena. This in turn is seen to deliver an experience that is not subject to change, one that has transcended the impact of life conditions, and as such is ongoingly happy. Seen as an endpoint of training [21], enlightenment we could say fits the description of full satisfaction (100%) and as such transcends the normal setpoint range (75%) of only partially satisfied well-being.

This literature documents advanced practitioners (long term meditators) who attain very different 'states' than the typical assumptions of conventional well-being or happiness. For example, advanced exponents of the contemplative traditions report being able to disengage from distracting mental processes [22] and enter self-transcendent states [23] not affected by life conditions. Documented as transpersonal [24], anomalous [25], nondual [26], mystical [27] or religious experiences [28] it seems of benefit to turn our focus to these advanced states, as they are most relevant to our inquiry.

One of our difficulties, however, is their differing points of reference and nomenclature. As such it may be of value to highlight their common ground. Essentially, these states all refer to both a dissolution of the sense of a separate self and a perception of oneness or sense of connectedness to others and one's surroundings [29]. Awakening to what is commonly called the "nondual" experience (not derived from relative conditions hence not dualistic in nature), is typically seen to result from the incremental removing of cognitive, perceptual, and sensory layers [30], leading to a mystical state of consciousness [31].

Joseph Campbell's [32] hero's journey is a secular approach that outlines what he sees as the requisite stages of development leading to this nondual experience. In his model, 17 stages are organised into three sections: departure, initiation, and return, during which the budding hero undergoes a moral, mental, emotional, physical, and finally spiritual transformation. Transpersonal theorists such as Maslow present it as a journey towards the progressive dissolution of the ego, leading to the pinnacle - self-realisation or a "self-less" state [33].

However, whilst there is certainly literature on these states and stages [34], conventional research into well-being and happiness does not yet have model that leads to them [35]. By contrast, the traditional origins of mindfulness, Buddhist psychology, has undergone much scientific scrutiny in recent years [36, 37], and is well positioned for this inquiry. And yet all the ancient wisdom traditions have also been studying the fundamentals of human happiness, usually for millennia. And when we explore their paradigms, we find the same claims that full satisfaction is the actualisation of our human potential.

Common to all these traditions is the claim that their most actualised practitioners, have achieved high levels of well-being and often super functionality [38].

Sometimes described as saints, mystics, rinpoches or avatars, the terms they use might instead be “at peace”, “content”, “perfect”. In the meditation and yoga traditions, mastery is mapped by a progression through these stages of spiritual development, leading to the perfection of human potential or enlightenment. And to back this up, these traditions all propose methods to achieve these qualities.

If we look at early mythical literature there is often a delineation between humans and gods, and to assume any personal power would be to commit hubris and guarantee your demise. However, this is typically not the case in the religious traditions, in fact, whilst religions may be millennia old and littered with similar stories of great feats, they offer a method of perfection for humans to follow (e.g., the way of the bodhisattva) which is often grounded in a methodology that is repeatable or testable [39]. And it appears that science is now entering a dialogue with these traditions to understand and test them [40].

One drawback however is there is not a clear link between these traditional notions of “nondual” happiness and our conventional paradigms of well-being. As pointed out by Sahdra et al. [41], whilst there may overlap, the mechanisms that underpin these nondual states, have no clear equivalent in conventional theory. If they could be better understood, they may assist us in finding a way to access the potential for uninterrupted happiness. Furthermore, it is possible, that once better acquainted with their content, that we will be able to evaluate the potential of their methods and explore how to assimilate them into western models.

2. Metaphysics and empiricism

However, before we can investigate these methodologies, we must address the often-antithetical relationship between religion and science, and the western materialist or pragmatist scientific approach to claims of perfection, or full satisfaction of our potential. Akin to the phenomenon of the tall poppy syndrome, where anyone that stands taller than others serves as a threat to be cut down, we instead need to cultivate a curiosity towards the opportunities of perfection offered by such methodologies.

Whilst currently mindfulness is being scientifically scrutinised, the investigation of other traditions and their advanced practices, with a few exceptions, is receiving little attention [42, 43]. One of the challenges is the scientific method or the data gathering approach often inherent in research. That is, the materialist or reductionist premise that if it cannot be verified it does not exist “Of that which we can’t speak about, we should remain silent” ([44], p. 189).

The challenge with scientific scrutiny is that it is necessarily limited to the evaluation of phenomena (and the sophistication of its instruments), and in the case of mindfulness, although some of its neuroscientific correlates may be able to be measured, the ultimate state and its subsequent attributes are non-conceptual and non-phenomenological. St Augustine aptly highlighted this quandary in the fifth century by famously saying “Si comprehendis, non est Deus” or “If you understood him, it would not be God” [45]. Psychology has always careered between the art and science of experience in its attempt to negotiate the intangible realm of thought (cognitivism) and the tangible world of behaviour (radical behaviourism). If we are to investigate the possibility of perfection, or completely happy, we will need to explore claims that, whilst possibly maybe quite natural, are not currently easy to verify.

Buddhist scholar Alan Wallace makes some salient comments relevant to such an inquiry: “In Buddhism, these are not miracles in the sense of being supernatural events, any more than the discovery and amazing uses of lasers are miraculous—however they may appear to those ignorant of the nature and potentials of light. Such contemplatives claim to have realized the nature and potentials of consciousness far beyond anything known in contemporary science. What may appear supernatural to a scientist, or a layperson may seem perfectly natural to an advanced contemplative, much as certain technological advances may appear miraculous to a contemplative” ([46], p. 103). Interestingly as early as the thirteenth century medieval Christian theologians were grappling with this same issue and ended up making the distinction between ‘miracles’ (miracula) and ‘marvels’ (mirabilia). Marvels were defined as having natural causes that were not understood, whilst miracles were unusual events produced by God’s power [47].

The modern materialist position about consciousness is that mind is only the result of physiological processes; that each person’s consciousness is a discrete and separate entity; communication is only possible through the physiological senses; and that consciousness dwells only within the time/space continuum [48]. As such research is typically conducted within the constraints of this paradigm. Nevertheless, like the burgeoning field of mindfulness there is also a growing amount of theory, empirical observation and now neuroscience research [49] within the parapsychology literature that also does not fit within this model [50]. In view of that, and to investigate the nondual, advanced altered states of consciousness, and their consequent attributes, current consciousness paradigms need ongoing investigation and revision.

The Dalai Lama, offers some guiding principles to the study of mindfulness [51], including scientific responsibility. “I am well aware, however, of the danger of tying spiritual belief to any scientific system...Great vigilance must be maintained at all times when dealing in areas about which we do not have great understanding. This, of course, is where science can help.” He then goes on to also encourage open mindedness towards states achieved through advanced practice “After all, we consider things to be mysterious only when we do not understand them. Through mental training, we have developed techniques to do things which science cannot yet adequately explain” ([52], pp. 230–243). Considering the above qualifications, we now move to a brief investigation of the theories proposed by major religious practices, in an attempt to forward the inquiry into the science of happiness.

3. Traditional happiness

There are quite distinct differences in both the presentations and methodologies for achieving happiness across the major religious traditions. Whilst all acknowledge the possibility of individuals being able to realise perfection, the authorship for the cause of the experience is divided between an act of grace and human effort. For example, in the Jewish tradition [53], of the varieties of Jewish mysticism, the 12th century Kabbalah is the most well-known [54], and sees itself as revealing the mystical tradition of the written and oral Torah. Of its three schools, the lesser known and approved “practical” school explores the mystical practices and the possibilities of perfected union with the divine [55]. For only those completely pure of intent, practical Kabbalah involved using practical methods that strove to achieve a mystical union with God.

In the Christian scriptures, whilst we are most cognisant of the documentation of Jesus' level of mastery and example of perfection, he also says that this is possible for others: "I tell you the solemn truth, the person who believes in me will perform the miraculous deeds that I am doing and will perform greater deeds than these" (John 14:12, New English Translation, [56]). In subsequent Christology (theology concerned with the relationship between Jesus' human and divine nature), hypostatic union (the union of humanity and divinity in one individual) are seen as indivisible in Jesus [57], and the invitation to some sharing of this union or perfection is indicated by texts such as "For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:12, 21st Century King James Version [58]). However, it also proposes a dissolution of the self for this to occur: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians, 2:20, New English Translation, [56]).

In the Buddhist tradition the Buddha achieved, through meditative effort, the state of enlightenment, hence the distinction of human and divine is not made. In this context there is access to complete mastery of the human condition, with the Buddha reportedly telling off an accomplished practitioner for unnecessarily levitating to retrieve a bowl [59]. In the Tibetan Buddhist esoteric school of Zchogchen, the first step of training is "Treckcho" or the perception of the view of "rigpa" or emptiness of all phenomena including the existence of an independently existing self [60]. However, if the master has determined that the student has achieved a sufficient state of ego-lessness then they are able to proceed to the advanced practice of "Togal" or skilful means where they train in mastery over matter.

In Islam the prophet Muhammad is presented as perfected, and the text of the Koran itself is believed to be a miraculous act of Allah, based on its unique structure and scientific predictions [61]. In the Islamic sect of Sufism there is a proliferation of mystics credited with a high level of mastery, along with a methodology for their attainment, (Zikr or "Divine remembrance") that can be followed to achieve their outcomes [62]. In Sufism "Fanaa" is seen as the annihilation of the ego or "to die before one dies", and is seen as a recognition of the unity of God and the individual self.

The great Hindu text, the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali, devotes one of his four chapters to mastery of the physical realm, and his eight limbs of yoga culminate in samadhi, absorption or union. In the Hindu tradition such mastery is viewed as natural milestone on the path of a yogi with spiritual development seen as parallel with increasing control over the material and spiritual worlds [63]. However, the ultimate goal is the achievement of enlightenment or "moksha", the reuniting with Brahman, which is the unchanging, infinite divine consciousness that permeates everything. Again, generated through dissolution of clinging to the sense of self, it proposes to deliver an absence of suffering, and the state of "paripurna-brahmanubhava" or self-knowledge, peace, and bliss (paripurna is the Sanskrit word for complete, perfect or whole).

A common feature across all the traditions is that such mastery ultimately turns its efforts for the benefit of others – a type of self-less enlightenment or union with everything. This is distinct from the common notion of happiness that seems to refer to one's own psychological state, and instead leans more towards altruism or heroism [64]. This, one could argue is reminiscent of philanthropy where, once one is not struggling, attention moves on to others. In this next section, as we are looking at the psychological correlates of happiness, we will confine ourselves to two traditions that are well known for their systematic methods – the meditation tradition of Buddhism and the yoga tradition of Hinduism.

4. Buddhist psychology

Buddhism has spawned different approaches since its origins however all forms; the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, assert the possible perfection of the practitioner, known respectively as the arahant, bodhisattva and mahasiddha [65]. The four noble truths remain the foundation: life is empty of inherent satisfaction; the source of suffering is craving for satisfaction from something that cannot provide it; suffering ceases when such craving ends; and there is a method to achieve this, the eightfold path. This method itself has eight parts: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration [66].

As a result of practice there is a progressive reduction in upsetting emotional states, inaccurate thinking and an increase in mental balance and positive emotions. Over time a practitioner gets to perceive the impermanent nature of mental and physical phenomena (*anicca*), and the lack of an abiding self (*anatta*) [67]. This state of enlightenment is the end goal to which the method aims, hence Buddhist psychology seeks to demonstrate that all suffering emanates from an ignorance (*avidya*) of reality as it is, and upon realising this, distress dissipates and a self-less way of experiencing the world called enlightenment (*bodhi*) is gradually revealed [21].

In the advanced or final stages practitioners are also seen to develop what could be seen as special abilities in comparison to normal functioning. These aptitudes are seen as a natural outcome of seeing through the illusion that the subjective self, and the objective phenomena, are separate and inherently existing outside of perception. In some of the early texts (Pali Nikayas and Vinaya) which Theravadin Buddhism holds to be authoritative (*buddhavacana*), five yogic powers are described as attainable. Known as the *abhinnas* or 'higher knowledges' they are attainable by practitioners who have passed the fourth of eight "dhyana" (Sanskrit) or "jhana" (Pali) states, which are levels of concentration and meditative absorption. The levels of jhana in themselves are an extraordinary account of progression up the ladder of mental control.

The Buddha in several sutras exhorts his disciples to develop the jhana states, and the first four figure in the training of right concentration in the eightfold path [68]. However, the average person does not typically enter the first level of mental control portrayed by these states [69], hence current research on happiness is unlikely to have considered such potential. And yet if we are to explore the human capacity for uninterrupted happiness, it seems critical to be acquainted with the advanced states of mindfulness, levels assumed as pre-requisite for serious practitioners [70].

Of the eight jhana states, in brief first jhana (joy) is the state of continuous concentration with no interruptions and pleasant sensations in the background. In second jhana (contentment) one lets go of the previous physical and emotional pleasure and moves to motionless, quiet contentment. Third jhana (utter peacefulness) is a sense of equanimity with no positive or negative feeling and an all pervading, peaceful one-pointedness of mind. In fourth jhana (infinity of space) there is the experience of absorption without form, attention shifts beyond the body as if watching oneself, and the self is experienced as the expanse of empty space.

In the Buddhist tradition it appears that, at a minimum, the practitioner must have progressed past the first four 'material' jhanas before mental abilities start to manifest [71, 72]. The remaining four jhanas, during which abilities may develop are: fifth jhana (infinity of consciousness) - awareness that infinite space includes your own consciousness and attention shifts to infinite consciousness (oneness with

nature and existence); sixth jhana (no-thingness) - realisation that infinite consciousness is empty of inherent existence, and all is impermanent and changing; seventh jhana (neither perception nor non-perception) - little recognition of what is happening (but not unaware) and has gone beyond the duality of perception nor non-perception; and eighth jhana (cessation) - cessation of consciousness with only subtle perception remaining (can appear unconscious), yet perfectly one with everything.

It is thought that six levels of material mastery can arise once one has progressed through these advanced stages of mindfulness [73]. These seemingly fantastical outcomes are the result of long-term training of adepts, and whilst modern day mindfulness does not touch on these topics, they serve to demonstrate the human potential such ancient traditions assume of their masters. These levels of mastery include: 1) performing miracles (psychokinesis), 2) celestial hearing (clairaudience); 3) knowledge of thoughts (telepathy); 4) knowledge of past and future (knowledge beyond time); 5) celestial vision (clairvoyance), and finally 6) Eradication of all defilements (end of suffering).

Seen as the realisation of enlightenment or *nibbāna*, the latter is seen as the attainment of most value, as the practitioner has transcended the cycle of birth and death and is seen to be perfected [74]. The full expression of these attributes is understood to be reached after having attained the highest spiritual state of *samadhi* or perfected union. Seen to be under the complete control of the practitioner [20], they are also seen as a natural expression of human capacity. As is evident, the ceiling set for the human potential for happiness is far above the adaptation and resilience models of SWB. As such it seems critical if we are serious about unpacking the causes and conditions of happiness, that we make a concerted effort to consult and translate such traditions for mainstream application.

5. Hinduism and happiness

Like Buddhist philosophy, the Hindu traditions have several schools of thought, of which yoga is one. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are seen as the seminal text and outline the eight limbs of yoga which is an articulation of a graded progression from gross to subtle practices leading the aspirant to submerge into oneness (*samadhi*). It is again seen from this state of *samadhi* that abilities beyond normal functioning (*siddhis*) or mastery of life areas (what we could tentatively correlate with quality of life) can develop [75, 76]. They are not considered as miraculous as there is no interference with the laws of nature but rather, they show mental mastery over matter and are part of how nature works [59].

In the model offered in the Yoga Sutras, step by step instructions of practice (*tapas*) and detachment (*vairagya*) are provided to remove five conditions (*kleshas*) that are the cause of unhappiness: ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life [77]. Patanjali explained eight practises or limbs to overcome life's difficulties: *yama* (five ethical practices), *niyama* (five spiritual disciplines), *asana* (multiple body postures), *pranayama* (breath control), *pratyahara* (sense control), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (contemplation), and again finally *samadhi* (absorption) [78].

In the third chapter of the Yoga Sutras, if a practitioner perfects the above practices, different levels of mastery can develop which could be classified under three categories: mind- body control, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis [79]. Specifically, the eight major abilities or primary *siddhis* (*ashta siddhi*) are described as: reducing one's

body if required (even to the size of an atom); expanding one's body to an infinitely large size; becoming infinitely heavy; becoming almost weightless; ability to be anywhere at will; realising whatever one desires; supremacy over nature; control of natural forces; and complete happiness.

In another seminal Hindu text, the Bhagavata Purana, Krishna describes ten more secondary signs of mastery that indicate a perfected master [80]: being undisturbed by hunger, thirst, and other bodily appetites; hearing things far away; seeing things far away; moving the body wherever thought goes (teleportation/astral projection); assuming any form desired; entering the bodies of others; dying when one desires; witnessing and participating with other being/in other realms; perfect accomplishment of what one intends; and unimpeded orders or commands.

By mastering the recommended practices, the practitioner or yogi is seen to be able to progressively acquire greater control of mind and body, and ultimately become self-realised or perfected (kaivalya) which is always the primary goal [78]. Like Buddhism, it is seen that along the way to the final stage of samadhi or ego-less absorption, such life mastery can develop, however the complete set of abilities cannot unfold until the perfection of the practitioner. It is thought that when the practitioner is unwavering, pure, untouchable, and blissful, then all our human potential opens out with restriction.

Considering the broad claims of the historical traditions, it is relevant to speculate how verifiable and how translatable are these models to western psychology. Whilst there is now a growing literature that documents relevant empirical findings [81, 82], we are talking about advanced meditators. One of the constraints we face is that, as some Buddhist texts say about the fully perfected end of the continuum, one in a thousand of a thousand of a thousand attain such levels [74]. Whilst such attainments and practices are seen as relevant and may be exhibited in some individuals today [83], it is critical to find some common ground with these traditions and our western concepts of happiness.

6. Nondual well-being

The common goal of the above traditions is the deconstruction of a false sense of self, leading to an enduring trait of happiness – what we could call nondual well-being. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, a highly accomplished practitioner, or bodhisattva, first dissolves this default sense of self (also described as awakening or enlightenment), but then continues the path of purification, to seek perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings [84].

Considering this, it seems that one construct that can bring us closer to this dialogue, is nondual well-being. Whilst still comparatively rare, deconstructing the sense of self is seen to be within the grasp of a serious practitioner, and can be experienced along the path to the previously mentioned extraordinary states and their consummation in perfect enlightenment [85, 86]. It is this lower hanging fruit, though uncommon, that needs further investigation.

To achieve this outcome involves the use of deconstruction methods to dissolve the sense of self [87]. Their primary target is cognitive reification, or our default propensity to relate to thoughts as objective realities [88]. By dismantling the apparently real entities of “I” (subject), “mind” or “things” (object), the practitioner can see them for what they are, mental or material phenomena, empty of inherent existence. These methods, if successfully practised, can lead to an ego-less experience, which is altruistic or self-less, as the sense of self is perceived as substance-less [89].

Once the false subject-object dualism is deconstructed, what is left is simply naked awareness, stripped of the unnecessary projection or superimposing of a self. With nothing to be affected by any mental phenomena arising within it, it can maintain its untouched nature [90]. Also described as a unitary state of consciousness [31], this “self-less” or nondual way of experiencing and relating to the world, is not detached and dry, but in the perception of nonduality or oneness, experiences a profound connectedness to people and the surroundings.

However, such a dissolving of the sense of self is in direct contrast with conventional notions of the self, traditional psychology, or personal growth, which aim to build a robust individual with a strong sense of self, sense of place, purpose, and boundary. Instead, it is seen that, in the early stages of human development, a sense of self is necessarily constructed and needs to be perceived as a subject that exists independently of objects [91]. And yet, it is this very construction that is seen as false and is the mental step that stops us from experiencing a natural state of self-less awareness or enlightenment [29, 92].

The notion of uninterrupted happiness or nondual well-being is currently beyond the assumed set-point ceilings (on average 75% satisfied) in conventional psychology. And yet the happiness outcome of this approach leaves people, on average, only partially satisfied. There is no ceiling of 100% satisfied, no room in the paradigm for perfection. In contrast the happiness proposed by the mystical or advanced teachings of all the ancient traditions, offers the possibility of an untouchable psychological state, but what underpins all of them is the dissolving of the self, not the building of the self.

In view of this conceptual difference and the difference in outcomes, it is recommended that the role of the sense of self in relation to happiness take centre stage in the research into happiness. For example, it would be of value to explore what might be the path for the transition from conventional SWB to nondual well-being. What are the processes and practices to replace the default dualism of subject-object perception with the “no-self” processing of the nondual experience? Similarly, like all growth, performance or development, there may be stages that need to be identified. As the experience progresses from presumably intermittent but increasing experiences of the falling away of the projected subject-object division [93], over time one would assume that practitioners would increase the frequency, duration, and intensity of these the nondual states until it stabilises [94].

The development of this capacity for nondual or uninterrupted happiness carries extraordinary implications in terms of the dominant psychological paradigm of well-being and happiness. The so-called enlightenment of Buddhist psychology is genuinely seen as the end of suffering, and a secular reconceptualization of the same outcome is well overdue. However, as Sogyal Rinpoche [60] highlights, if it is to be truly scientific and investigative it must be “shorn of dogma, fundamentalism, exclusivity, complex metaphysics, and culturally exotic paraphernalia, a path at once simple and profound, a path that does not need to be practiced in ashrams or monasteries but one that can be integrated with ordinary life and practice anywhere” (p. 151).

7. Discussion

There were two questions posed in this inquiry: can humans be full satisfied, or experience complete happiness versus partial happiness; and are there any approaches

or disciplines that point us in that direction. We were seeking a model of well-being that is not subject to fluctuations, as opposed to the dominant construct of SWB, where scores typically only improve within a limited set range that is only partially satisfied being [95]. That is can someone develop an experience of well-being that does fluctuate in response to changing life circumstances (nondual well-being).

What we discovered is that the nondual approaches, as presented by the ancient wisdom or mystical traditions within all major religions, offer both method and claim that this is possible. However, to achieve this we come up against paradigmatic differences between traditional religious approaches and conventional psychological constructs of the self. What is clear is that practitioners in the fields of religion and psychology, when it comes to happiness, have conducted their investigations with little attempt at translation, and as such their relative insights or claims require further investigation. As such a more multidisciplinary is recommended so that any relevant constructs seen as fundamental to the attainment of happiness, are integrated into the psychological literature [96]. Whilst some work has been done such as the integration of mindfulness and cognitive-behavioural therapy [97], investigation into the theory and practices of nondualism is critical.

What seems called for is a collaborative relationship between the researchers of the dominant model of well-being, SWB, and the practitioners and researchers from the origins of mindfulness, as found in the Buddhist and Hindu paradigms. The first directional recommendation is a deep dive into the primary point of difference, the notion of the self. Pivotal to the nondual approach is the role that identification with a sense of self has upon happiness, and due to its influence, upon cognitive processing [29].

From a philosophical perspective there has already been much inquiry into the intangible quality seemingly inherent in tangible things. For example, in Western philosophy, Aristotle in the *Categories* distinguished between the essential versus accidental or optional properties of objects [98]. Aristotle proposed that all things had an essential nature of being or “ousia”, such that if it did not exist, then any of its observable or changeable characteristics would be unable to exist.

The term emptiness or “sunyata” bears some resemblance to this in Eastern philosophy. Seen as the ultimate reality, ground, or substratum of all that can be observed, it is conceptualised as an uncreated and indestructible [99]. However, the concept of sunyata also includes the understanding that all things are empty of intrinsic existence including awareness itself. The Dalai Lama [100] cautions that the term emptiness implies that everything, whether it is objective (material) or subjective (mental) does not have an immutable essence, or intrinsic reality that is independent of its form.

As the foundations of much of both our Western science and theology (St Thomas Aquinas) were greatly informed by Aristotelian logic, there already exist conceptual frameworks that may be relevant to this detente. As such this existent and rich inquiry could be explored in service of a dialogue with Eastern thought on the varying concepts of the self, and their respective utility or relevance to the experience of uninterrupted well-being.

In the construction of a cohesive psychological model, it is possible that there could almost be two stages that bear further inquiry. The first or introductory level may still be able to incorporate some of the comprehensive work already done around developmental theory. For example, this could include psychological stage theories that map out normal process of development where each of the requisite stages are met. Relevant theories that might be considered could include Maslow’s [33]

hierarchy of needs, Erikson's [101] psychosocial development, Kohlberg's [102] moral development, Fischer's cognitive development [103], Bowlby's theory of attachment [104] or Bandura's social learning theory [105].

This first stage of development, including the construction of a sense of self, could be seen, akin to Piaget's [106] theory of cognitive development, as a necessary foundation for subsequent stages. For example, in Piaget's preoperational stage (2 to 7 years), children exhibit egocentrism, or the inability to see another person's experience as different from theirs. However, in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development (7 to 12 years) they develop the capacity to see past their own experience and explore hypothetical and abstract concepts they have not experienced yet. In a like manner, there may be some utility in the initial development of a sense of self that, whilst delivering partial or event-based happiness, is still developing skills in how to minimise pain and maximise pleasure.

In the second stage, once sufficient skills were learned, the limitations of the first stage could be surpassed, namely the now redundant identification with a sense of self. This could then issue in the paradigm and practices for the deconstruction of that sense, allowing for the delivering of well-being or happiness not derived from mental or material phenomena. Whilst these observations include an integration of current paradigms, there may not be a need for such a hybrid model if a more continuous one was able to be operationalised to incorporate natural human development.

The next recommendation is to explore the various training models employed in the nondual approaches that assist practitioners to move through the beginner, intermediate and advanced stages [21, 107]. For example, like in Tibetan Buddhism, practitioners could be taught at the introductory level to notice mental and physical phenomena objectively without attachment, and to deconstruct the tendency to separate subject and object. With mastery they could move to an intermediate level where they would be trained to observe neutrally and non-judgmentally all phenomena without the optional sense of a "self". This with practice could lead to the intermittent experience of the dissolution of the sense of a "self". Finally, the practitioner could be trained in the suite of meditation practices [31] that would assist in attaining a sustained non-judgmental attention towards all phenomena, leading to an abiding nondual experience of well-being [108]. At the completion of this stage ongoing well-being or happiness is not at the mercy of changing life conditions, but pivots more from an impartial state of awareness that is spontaneously happy in itself.

Such a collaborative investigation, if able to cohesively translate and incorporate distinctions from the nondual traditions, could have significant clinical, research and economic implications, as we would have a model of well-being and happiness that is not susceptible to breakdown in response to life conditions. In view of the relationship between well-being, symptom checklists, and health status [109, 110], such robust well-being would necessarily impact policy and healthcare budgets, as ultimately there would be less presentations within allied health services, and reduced resource allocation to relevant health sectors.

Finally, in view of the growth in self-mastery that is claimed to come with nondual well-being, it could expand our understanding of human potential beyond the assumed levels norms of human functioning [17, 81], which may have wide-ranging implications for society. Such a comprehensive construct of well-being seems to allow for an individual to be fully functional in life, whilst having an experience of happiness independent of them.

This invitation for more dialogue is well expressed by Sedlmeier et al. [111]: "We believe every effort should be made to extract precise psychological theories that are

relevant for meditation from both the Hindu and Buddhist approaches.” (p. 1162). It also echoes an earlier, and somewhat unheeded call by the father of psychology William James who commented “The great field for new discoveries,’ said a scientific friend to me the other day, ‘is always the ‘unclassified residuum.’ Round about the accredited and orderly facts of every science there ever floats a sort of dust-cloud of exceptional observations, of occurrences minute and irregular and seldom met with, which it always proves easier to ignore than to attend to. ... Anyone will renovate his science who will steadily look after the irregular phenomena” [112].

A comprehensive paradigm that can operationalise a “full life satisfaction” construct, what provisionally could be called “enlightenment psychology” or “nondual well-being” needs to be a key concern for human society [113]. We could start by taking inspiration from Bhutan’s Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH) hybrid construct [114], that puts happiness as the key ingredient in policy. Such a portrayal of a fully satisfied individual contrasts with the currently research-based representation of Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith’s [6] original profile, conservative, middle class and partially satisfied.

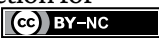
By contrast we could explore, in mainstream language and constructs, the sentiments of another ancient mystic St Irenaeus [115] who wrote in 150 A.D., “Gloria enim Dei vivens homo” (p. 283), translated as the glory of God is man fully alive. It could be argued that our human potential has been identified many centuries ago and yet still not suspected by our scientific disciplines. In view of a world in need of selfless people that are happy for no reason, it is time that this dialogue becomes a central concern in the research into human happiness.

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Presence and Self-Learning: An Evolutionary Hypothesis

Fabio Vanni

Abstract

This work aims to examine the idea of ‘presence’ as a form of quality of one’s being in the world by exploring some concepts that are connected to it, such as fullness, self-learning, time, well-being. We shall draw attention to certain pathways of thinking relating to how human subjects may live the experience more fully and with greater self-learning by referring to the psychoanalytical tradition, and to mindfulness and cognitive psychology, and the cognitive inputs which these disciplines supply, for instance, in studies on memory and learning. Whereas the majority of psychoanalytical tradition regards malaise (unwellness) as an anachronism, or as the hyper-presence of the past in its meeting with the present, the hypothesis of highlighting the presence to oneself as a form of opening and of fullness of the experience itself may lead to formulating theoretical bases, which we aim to discuss.

Keywords: presence, self-learning, mindfulness, psychoanalytical theory, time, fullness, well-being, happiness

1. Introduction

If we refer to the most accredited evolutionary theories on the human subject (for instance, Quaglia and Longobardi [1], but also Pelanda [2]) the idea that is developed, starting from a genetic endowment that expresses itself in an environment, through co-construction of experiences of being in the world that are sedimented in memories, seems to be shared by many.

Following Imbasciati and Cena [3] and Minolli et al. [4], one can trace the start of this process back to the intra-uterine period of the subject’s life, immediately after conception, and proceed until the subject’s death.

The evolution of the subject is a pathway that is always oriented by experience, and that is set within the genetic constraints as they are ‘realised’, in the etymological sense of ‘made real’, over time. In other words, more familiar perhaps in scientific language, we can say that the genotype is realised in the phenotype.

Experience brings together the unconscious and conscious levels of what the subject learns about his or her living, from living itself. From microbiological levels to cultural forms, everything constitutes a heritage that the individual subject makes his own and uses to orient himself, moment by moment in the progress of his life.

Therefore, when we speak of the subject we will be referring to this unitary, relational, formal configuration and place the concept of 'experience' itself on the same subjectual level.

It is well known (Bolk [5]) that the plasticity of this process is particularly high in human subjects (the so-called 'neoteny'), and this gives their relationality with the world, or more precisely their experience of it, a fundamental value, which is greater than in other species, as is commonly known.

Because of the need to articulate this flow so as to be able to study it, the academic world of psychology has divided the processes we are talking about into functions: memory, learning, thought, emotions, language, etc. It is the knowledge we have of these domains that will provide the ideas that lead to a detailed understanding of how the evolutionary process takes place. We will not go into these very complex domains, but we should acknowledge that they have provided many useful contributions, particularly in the recent decades, to our knowledge of the human subject. In particular, studies on memory and emotions (Damasio [6]) have helped us to understand what form experience takes in emotional-cognitive terms and what 'reservoirs' we use upstream to read what happens to us, including what we actively produce in the world.

Memory is so important that if we were to conduct a thought experiment simulating being in the world without memory to guide us, we would find ourselves in a state of enormous disorientation and undeniable distress, as shown by those people who, in connection with CNS diseases involving certain areas of the brain, find themselves in such a situation.

But we should also try to produce the opposite simulation, that is of someone who goes towards a new experience and completely saturates it in his or her memory.

We have probably had many possibilities of observing people approaching this condition, in an occasional or permanent manner, and we are undoubtedly familiar with it ourselves, to a greater or lesser extent.

This is a condition of non-listening and non-learning, or, to put it more exactly, of absolute prevalence of Piagetian assimilation over accommodation (Piaget [7]).

At the other extreme of this condition, we could say that there is no experience other than the inclusion of the new bit of information within an organisation that is untouched by it. +1 that does not modify what exists. A Batesonian 'zero' learning [8]—in reference to the well-known taxonomy of learning—is proposed by Gregory Bateson. Perhaps, in fact, we should add that it confirms the exactness of the perspective. And this leads us to an important aspect of our reasoning.

In fact, we know that when a child is about one and a half years old, he acquires the capacity to turn himself into the object and subject of experience, or what Minolli (*ibid.*) calls 'consciousness of consciousness'.

This capacity, which would appear to be specifically human, is what enables the constitution of identity, that is the representation of what a subject feels/thinks he or she is, the attribution to oneself of what one experiences.

The concept of identity, as expounded in this way (Tricoli [9]), offers a significant complexification to evolutionary theory because it allows each experience to be seen in relation to the consistency/inconsistency with the identity that the subject enacts at that moment.

Identity becomes a particularly important point of reference as a summit from which to evaluate experience, and it is its rigidity or permeability that makes the difference.

It is indeed possible that an experience that introduces a significant inconsistency into the subjective system will be welcomed as an opportunity or even as a threat.

The resulting emotion will, however, be consistent with the identity meaning that the experience assumes.

From this point of view, anguish signals a meaning of danger to the given identity, which is considered somehow inemendable or to be defended rather than enriched or revised.

An example makes what has been stated more evident. Seventeen-year-old Luca has experienced certain erotic images and thoughts of a homosexual nature, which contrast with his heterosexual identity. Luca strenuously opposes the appearance in his consciousness of these experiences, which he considers unacceptable. When he happens to experience them, he goes so far as to hit himself and thrash about on the floor of his house, screaming in the hope of chasing them away. Luca is the eldest son of a large family and feels that he represents an example for his siblings as well as the first realisation of the family myth holding together the two cultures his parents have each brought. Eleonora is the same age as Luca and she feels attracted by girls and, to a lesser extent, by boys aged thirteen to fourteen; she treats these feelings and emotions with curiosity and openness. She avoids rigidly defining herself according to sexual orientation and feels she is experiencing a condition of 'open' fluidity. This condition is quite common among her companions, and even at home it is treated as an understandable phase of her adolescence.

In our culture, the most common condition of a subject is to value the consistency of his/her identity. But living brings one's consciousness into potentially continuous contact with stimuli—which we can schematically consider as pertaining to the internal world (body and consciousness) or the external world—that introduce information which can gradually confirm or disconfirm one's identity, or which can be placed within a range of experiences.

Luca was first disturbed by the homosexual images he saw on a site, but perhaps the fact he found them was not accidental. What matters here, however, is that this experience, which produced a form of proto-excitement in him, was very distant from his identity, that is from his idea of himself. When Eleonora had an experience of erotic disturbance when sleeping with one of her classmates, she felt she could embrace this experience by redefining her identity as fluid.

My thesis is that the subject is in a continuous and multiple relationship with the world and, through consciousness of consciousness, with himself, and the quality of his presence in this flux constitutes the core of well-being/malaise and, more generally, the quality of his being in the world itself.

There is, of course, no objectively optimal or healthy approach to refer to, there is one's own approach that can evolve over time in different directions, and the task of psychological scientific knowledge is to understand what relationship exists between a certain structure of subjectual functioning and the lived experience, behaviour, etc.

2. Change, evolution, presence to oneself

How does change happen? A fine book by Ford and Lerner [10] illustrates in detail the complexity that this word can contain. If we think of the subject as a system and therefore as an entity in a relationship with its environment, unitarily constituted and internally articulated, with a singular trajectory that develops over time (Minolli, *ibidem*), we can imagine that a stimulus, as we have seen, may have encountered an emotional availability and reactivity in Luca, and that change will affect what he will do with this experience. Eleonora seems to be able to accept a less rigid identity

and allows herself be crossed, fertilised, taken by the experiences she is living at this moment of her life.

These two brief human events tell us, first of all, that change occurs in relation to the self and, more precisely, to how the subject experiences his world.

But it also tells us that the road of rejection and the battle against what is experienced are destined to make us a terrain of suffering that has as its advantage the conservative maintenance of an historically given identity which is today somewhat in crisis, which we are partly tempted to integrate but fear to do so.

Both psychoanalysis, in most of its many theoretical-clinical forms, and meditation, in particular the increasingly widespread form in the Western world called Mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn [11]), as well as other theories and methods of psychotherapeutic intervention and healing practices—though not all of them—seem to me to be moving in the direction of facilitating a presence to oneself, in other words an accepting and integrative contact with what is in each person's experience¹.

In fact, it is very different to think of a normality or ideality of self which we can follow or try to follow, rather than follow what is already there, that infinite well of experience which evolves in ourselves-in-relation and which we can only try to listen to and connect with.

In our perspective, the subject is not oriented by consistency but by consistency and inconsistency. Not only by order but by order/disorder (Morin [12], Manghi [13]), his identity, his idea of self, may be more or less anchored, attentive, to a consistency, perhaps to an order sometimes considered socially presentable.

A well-known experiment that of the 'ghost hand'² makes us realise how attached we are to the memory of the cognitive-affective representation we have of ourselves in spite of an experience that would urge us to accommodate this image.

But also, more commonly, the discrepancy between the perception of our image or the sound of our recorded voice can elicit surprise or even disappointment.

However, this should not induce us to think that the subject, and therefore not only his or her identity, is anchored to self-consistency. Quite the contrary. Just as so many irrational or apparently incomprehensible choices, or more commonly symptoms, show us, the subject continually produces discontinuous forms which may remain outside consciousness for long—think of many forms of illness³—and then emerge symptomatically or through egodistonic forms of experience such as symptoms or dreams or acts whose meaning we do not understand, at least not at first glance.

This way of functioning of the human subject, constantly producing forms, usually subliminally, inconsistent with identity, appears to be very functional in introducing complexity, and thus change, into the subjectual system, in other words producing stimuli which the subject is urged to deal with by virtue of the experiences of pain and/or discomfort or outright malaise, or more simply curiosity and

¹ In Buddhist Vipassana meditation, for example, the concept of Sati is considered the first of the seven factors of enlightenment.

² In short, this research focuses on people who have lost the use of a hand as a result of a trauma and continue to experience having that limb long after its amputation.

³ I am using the word disease here in a specifically biomedical sense, believing it inappropriate to use it in relation to the subject. The subject does not fall ill, he experiences forms of discomfort and malaise or fulfilment and joy or whatever, but the language to be used to describe these states is on a different level than the biological one, which is inevitably partial.

attraction—as Eleonora has shown us—that he or she experiences in relation to some of the outcomes of the discontinuities that emerge in consciousness-of-consciousness.

The theoretical representation that we are proposing, which develops the thinking of some of the authors cited through a partially new thesis, is consistent with the development that research and theory on dissociative experiences have produced in the recent years (e.g. Bromberg [14]), basically showing that the internal articulation of the subject may constitute a way of being that is not necessarily dysfunctional.

We would like to postulate the thesis that all forms of development of human subjects, both those that we experience more commonly and fluidly, and those that generate more discomfort or even malaise or the so-called psychotic forms, might follow this dynamic in which the subject's relationship with the world and with his or her self-consciousness produces partly discontinuous or inconsistent experiences that require an identity check with multiple outcomes.

In this approach, the concept of self-presence, which occupies a central place in much of Eastern thinking, as well as in the work of authors such as De Martino [15] or Minolli (*ibid.*) or Jervis [16], appears to be a key concept in order to understand even experiences such as those of happiness and well-being.

3. Happiness, fulfilment, presence

Happiness appears to us as a 'punctiform' experience, as a short-lived state of mind which I think should be distinguished from serenity or, in a different way, from satisfaction or pleasure, which often also forms part of it.

In relation to the perspective we have briefly outlined above, happiness seems to be connected with the experience of identity confirmation that we perceive. Confirmation which can concern any kind of event and whose intensity will be precisely connected, we believe, with the identity relevance of what we experience.

I observe that a whole world emphasises the relevance and value of happiness, partly for economic purposes by showing forms and products that would be useful in achieving it (the list of examples would be practically endless), totally aligned with the idea of finding—outside oneself—the objects that would provide happiness itself. Such a perspective is linked to the support and enhancement of the ideal of self, which, in our thesis, gains meaning if we connect it to the confirmation of our interpretative power of ourselves in the world. We certainly do not wish to view this perspective in a devaluing way but only to place it in a subjective meaning consistent with the proposed theoretical perspective. This is also 'that which is present' in our experience and we are fully aware of it. We might add that the experience of happiness certainly supports 'that' direction of one's living and as such appears to be invigorating and nourishing, useful to avoid living in a state of perpetual psychic labour. The concept of happiness thus appears to us to be interpretable as confirming and sustaining the identity with which the subject is aligned in the given moment of his existence, thereby constituting a support for it.

Presence to self also appears as a premise of fullness of the experience, and thus a form of being in the world that allows one to live in a more open, receptive, learning manner, not necessarily in relation to experiences confirming one's identity configuration but rather in relation to experiences that can be integrated, in a logic that is assimilative-accommodative, however, and not merely moved to the front of the line.

The discordant experience with one's own identity configuration, which the subject can nevertheless integrate, position, think about, digest, constitutes an

experience which might present anxiety or even discomfort, but leads to an extension of the presence of self and of the fullness with which we live our existence. Fullness involves living the moment, the time of existence in a way that is oriented towards the present self, as we shall see more clearly below.

In the reality of our lives, the ideal of self-presence is naturally more or less distant from our individual experience where, on the other hand, defensive forms of one's identity configuration are always concretely present. The experience of openness to what is in each person's individual experience is in fact potentially destabilising and not at all easy to pursue permanently, especially in our society. After all, Tibetan monks or anyone who devotes their existence to the contact with one's self, do so in contexts where the surrounding reality is much less pressing, much more rarefied, allowing more space for the fullness of the experience of self and the world in which the subject finds himself.

It could also be argued, not entirely wrongly in the writer's opinion, that individuals who have greater self-presence are less easily oriented as citizens, more capable of in-depth perspective and equilibrium, and this is not necessarily a condition everyone wishes to achieve.

4. Self-learning

Within the subject areas we mentioned earlier, learning constitutes one of the most relevant chapters. It is usually understood, however, as learning something that we did not previously know. At school and in the sphere of training, learning actually overlaps with the acquisition of contents, skills and competences.

On the other hand, it seems to me that the perspective we are examining leads us to think that it is our being in contact with experience that directs us to self-learning opportunities, or to a range of possibilities that go from the aforementioned assimilation of experience, where what we experience fits perfectly within the categories we possess and, if anything, constitutes yet another confirmation of their validity, and as such the value of ourselves as interpreters of the world, to encompass experiences that require greater or lesser adjustments of these categories, as well as an adjustment of ourselves since we are constituted by them, in order to hold in greater account ourselves and our world.

In order to do this, however, to develop a learning form of being in the world requires a willingness to focus on and relativise the categories we use to interpret our experience of it. What is needed is a centring, a contact with the self, that is not eliminative but questioning, enlarging, integrative, like a horizon towards which to strive.

Self-learning therefore does not, strictly speaking, need external objects and can instead gain nourishment from internal objects, from the experience of self as subject and object.

It should be pointed out that self-learning is a concept that can also be used in the relationship with external objects if one focuses on the internal variations of the subject in relation to the (external) object, also creating a dual learning: of oneself and of the object itself.

5. Being and time

The reference to Heidegger [17] is remote, nevertheless I believe it is necessary to spend a few words on the subject of time in the perspective we are examining here.

The saturation of experience that we have just outlined as one of the two extremes of the subject-world relationship appears, in fact, quite clearly to be a reading of the present as an actualization of the past, and thus as a non-full presence of self in the present time. In a certain sense, we might claim that the purpose of the anachronism described is precisely the attempt to avoid being touched by the experience of the present, and thus the tendency to live a sort of life in the trenches, in defence of what has been learnt as identity and made absolute. A seemingly titanic effort in a world of relationships, however, can have an obvious function of orientation in a world so devoid of absolute references and therefore requiring one to face experience 'bare-handed', on one's own.

I believe that psychological treatment when working with self-secluded boys or with anorexic girls can help us to understand how this position is anything but unreal for them as well as for a number of subjects today.

While the reasons for such a psychological position are therefore well understood, what we believe gives quality to existence consists instead of maintaining or even pursuing a contact with oneself as an experiential subject by holding a centre of gravity that enhances, allowing one to feel the present almost moment by moment.

Here, too, the experience of meditation helps us through the concept of the 'Beginner's Mind', the position of a subject who treats the new experience as not already saturated by the past, and therefore powerful and fruitful.

Consequently, it seems to me that the time that is given to us is lived more fully, allowing us to incorporate new things into our own history and experience, moment by moment, without the past saturating what is there.

After all, this perspective is the one that allows us not to get completely caught up in a future life viewed as a destiny already sealed off; it allows us to introduce qualitative variations by making full use of the time we have and the relationships we are in.

6. Well-being

The most common interpretation of well-being makes it a concept that ranges from the economic aspects to health-related ones, without, in my opinion, actually hitting the target that is contained in the lemma. It is in fact 'being' that is the key word and can guide us to understand what its 'well-' is (Irtelli [18]).

If the being is the human subject, I believe that its wellness can be a matter that ultimately concerns each one of us and should now be integrated within the considerations that have so far been made.

If we had asked ourselves this question a century or two ago, the well-ness of being would have been closely linked to its social function. In the Western world—and not only—adult men and women had specific functions that gave meaning to their existence, while a child or an elderly person had other functions that were equally clearly defined. For none of these people would the internal world, feelings, affections, perceived self-realisation have been as important as they are today. At best, they would have found themselves in conflict with their social function: as husband/father, as woman/mother, etc., within a social order seen as more rigidly given than it appears today.

Luca's and Eleonora's experiences would have been downgraded to transient intimate details, which would then have found their place in a precise social order a few years later, risking a traumatic exit from it, marginalisation or madness.

Instead, the value of the subject and his internal worlds is now highlighted, even exhibited as unique and relevant, at times even as an absolute ethical criterion indicating that anything is possible.

This is probably one of the reasons for the increased demand for psychic care that we have witnessed over time in the West. A demand for care is a demand to focus on one's own subjectual world, but also a request for help in handling it, and this is anything but obvious, as we have tried to illustrate.

For many reasons that I have discussed elsewhere (see Vanni, [19]), the subject has become highly relevant, even central to people, while the social order has evolved strongly and is less shared within the same culture; on the other hand, the culture of the inhabitants of a place has become less separated from the other cultures of the planet (the so-called 'globalisation'). The need that arises today is to orient oneself in order to identify new paths, not given, that concern the different spheres of life—from the local level to the planetary one, and perhaps beyond, in perspective—and I believe that the dimension of the subject and his well-being should necessarily be placed within this panorama.

In fact, if for Freud, over a century ago, the capacity to love and to work were the criteria of mental health, nowadays one would very much doubt not only the exhaustiveness, but also the relevance of these two aspects that do not appear to capture the qualitative, self-referential aspect of one's being in the world.

It is difficult today to identify as the ideal of the human being a sexual/operational productivism which we find in a modernist culture from which people have long and increasingly distanced themselves, also in view of the collapse of the ideals proposed by that culture, which today appears to present ecological risks, colonialist absolutism, etc.

I believe that we can no longer think of that well-being as the goal of people, and of psychic care for them, but I also believe that it is a matter of finding not an idea of absolutized and de-historicised well-being but rather a well-being in the contemporaneity of our time and place, glocally understood, where we are now.

I think we can be helped here by the thinking of complexity (e.g. Ceruti [20] Morin, *ibidem*), which identifies a key aspect in keeping differences together in a non-reductionist manner.

Perhaps, then, well-being is given by the capacity to keep together this internal complexity, this continuous order-disorder, to use a terminology closer to the thinking of complexity, which we have tried to present, with an external complexity which is equally relevant; I hypothesise that contact with the self, with one's own finiteness given by a lifetime of uncertain but not infinite duration; hence, the desacralising relativisation of one's own humanity, with that concretely present configuration, with its characteristics—physical, character, social—may constitute an opportunity for quality of existence and thus a 'well'—being in the sense of what is desirable and possible.

Not therefore an absolute being but a relative, contingent, singular being.

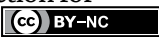
It is certainly not the only perspective from which we can observe ourselves, and the contemplative dimension may well give way to far more operational dimensions; nevertheless, it might be worthwhile to be able to go back to it in order to place our feet on the ground in this part of the world and at this time in history.

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Gratitude and Happiness: The Causes and Consequences of Gratitude

Philip C. Watkins, Michael Frederick and Alexander W. Dodson

Abstract

In this chapter, we review recent research on the relationship between gratitude and happiness. First, we show how gratitude is a critical component of the good life. Because gratitude is vital to wellbeing, it is important to establish the causes of state and trait gratitude. We explain an appraisal approach to grateful emotion and show how certain benefit interpretations are critical to the experience of gratitude. In this context, we describe an encouraging new paradigm that has been applied to the study of gratitude: cognitive bias modification. This experimental approach has helped to establish the causal status of interpretations to gratitude, and we describe how this methodology should help to understand gratitude in future research. Recent research on the cognitive antecedents of gratitude has shown that the nature of the benefactor matters to experiences of gratitude, and in this regard, a divine benefactor may create a unique experience of gratitude. Gratitude scholars have now turned to the question: How does gratitude enhance happiness? We present research and theories that have attempted to speak to this issue. Finally, we explore the question: Who benefits most from gratitude interventions? Research has supplied some surprising answers to this question.

Keywords: gratitude, happiness, subjective wellbeing, positive psychology, gratitude to god

1. Introduction

“In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give and that it is with gratitude that life becomes rich.” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer ([1], p. 52).

It is worth noting that Bonhoeffer wrote this while he was in a German prison for his involvement in a plot to kill Hitler. In this passage, Bonhoeffer brings out several important truths that are relevant to this chapter. First, that most humans experience far more good than bad in their life, and second, that gratitude enhances our experience of the good in life. Indeed, the theme of this chapter is that gratitude enhances subjective well-being (SWB) because it amplifies the good in life.

2. Gratitude is a critical component of the good life

Is gratitude important to the good life? Following others, we define the good life as using one's strengths in a way that produces enduring happiness. Thus, happiness and satisfaction with life are central components of the good life. In this section, we will attempt to establish that gratitude does indeed enhance happiness. First, a plethora of studies established that gratitude is strongly correlated with happiness [2, 3]. However, a multitude of correlations does not increase the likelihood that gratitude actually *causes* happiness. Providing stronger support for causation, several prospective studies have shown that gratitude predicts increased well-being over time [4, 5], and a number of experimental studies have manipulated gratitude exercises and shown that gratitude increases happiness [3, 6–8] (for reviews, see [9, 10]). In short, correlational, prospective, and experimental studies have supported the conclusion that gratitude is a critical component of the good life.

3. What causes gratitude?

As we have seen, gratitude is important to human flourishing. Because gratitude is vital to SWB, it is vital to understand what causes gratitude. To discuss the causes of gratitude, however, we need a basic definition of gratitude. Here we will define gratitude at two levels of analysis: state and trait. The emotional state of gratitude may be defined as a positive emotional response to a benefit that one believes was largely provided by someone else [10]. We define “benefit” in a wide sense as it may be the addition of a positive event in one's life, but it may also be an aversive event that does not happen or even positive aspects that are perceived from a negative event. Although many definitions of gratitude merely require that one perceives that the benefit came from an outside source, we include the source as “someone” because the outside source is personalized in some way. Although some recent work has tried to argue that the source of the benefit can be oneself, we believe that this confuses gratitude with pride, and thus is not a helpful direction for the study of gratitude.

The trait or disposition of gratitude is simply one's propensity to experience state gratitude. Thus, a grateful person—or one high in trait gratitude—experiences grateful emotion frequently across a wide variety of circumstances. Stated differently, one high in the disposition of gratitude has a low threshold for state gratitude. There are now several measures of trait gratitude with good psychometric properties that researchers can use [2, 3, 11].

What causes a grateful emotional response? In exploring the antecedents of gratitude, we take an appraisal approach [12, 13]. In brief, the appraisal theory of emotion argues that each distinct emotion is caused by its own distinct appraisal or construal. An appraisal is simply one's interpretation of an event. Thus, if one interprets a gift of flowers as a kind, thoughtful act, one is likely to experience gratitude. If, however, one sees the flowers as an attempt to manipulate them in some way, one will probably not feel grateful.

From the seminal research of Tesser and colleagues [14] to the present, researchers have held that three primary appraisals of an event cause gratitude: value, altruism, and cost. Thus, one is more likely to experience gratitude when they value a benefit, when they think the benefactor provided the benefit from altruistic motives (i.e., it was given primarily for the beneficiary's benefit), and when they interpret the benefit as being costly for the benefactor to provide.

Recent research has supported the importance of value and altruism appraisals to gratitude. For example, when surveying faculty regarding a significant raise that they received, the more they valued the raise and felt the university provided the raise for the faculty's benefit, the more gratitude they reported [15]. Indeed, the psychological value of the raise predicted gratitude above and beyond the objective value of the raise. What was interesting about this study is how strongly value drove gratitude, and this finding is consistent with Forster et al. [16].

These findings emphasize the importance of understanding the psychology of valuing an event, and we believe that progress in understanding how humans value an event is important to understanding the causes of gratitude. We propose that this relates closely to an understanding of *appreciation*, a cognitive process that is essential but not identical to gratitude [17]. What is appreciation? Whereas some have defined appreciation quite broadly, we feel it is most helpful to limit appreciation to cognitive processes (although it undoubtedly affects and is influenced by emotion). In this regard, we put forth Janoff-Bulman's definition of appreciation as most helpful to advancing research on appreciation. According to Janoff-Bulman and Berger [18], when we appreciate something there is an "Appraisal of increased value or worth ... We increase its perceived value in our eyes" (p. 32). When our home appreciates, its monetary value increases. When we appreciate something, the psychological value of the object increases for us. A review of the psychology of appreciation is beyond the limits of our chapter [10, 17], but hopefully, this discussion will foster future research on valuing and appreciation.

We have seen that altruism and value are critical appraisals to the experience of gratitude. But recent research has questioned the importance of cost appraisals to gratitude [16]. Indeed, in the Watkins et al. study [15], appraisals of the cost to the university for faculty raises showed very low correlations with gratitude for the raise, and in a simultaneous multiple regression, cost was no longer a significant predictor of gratitude. We found these findings surprising because obviously, providing these raises presented a significant objective cost to the university. Following up on this finding, McLaughlin and associates manipulated cost to the benefactor in a scenario study [19]. Although this was an intentionally large cost manipulation, it had no impact on recipients' gratitude. Moreover, self-reported cost appraisals were not correlated with gratitude. Indeed, participants appeared to be insensitive to the costs to the benefactor. Once again, however, value appraisals showed robust correlations with gratitude. Taken together, this evidence suggests that people make a more global appraisal of the "goodness of the giver" [10], rather than a more detailed analysis of the benefactor that would include cost. We suggest that future research continue to investigate the importance of cost appraisals to gratitude.

In sum, research supports the idea that appraisals of value and altruism are cognitive antecedents of gratitude. Are there other cognitive characteristics that shape gratitude responses? Recent research has shown that the characteristics of the benefactor impact gratitude. In the scenario study described above, McLaughlin et al. [19] manipulated the type of benefactor. They found that people were more grateful to an individual benefactor than to an institution (in this case, the university), for an equivalent monetary benefit. Thus, the characteristics of the benefactor seem to determine grateful responses. Clearly, more research on this issue is needed.

The nature of the benefactor brings up another interesting question: What if the source of the benefit is supernatural, rather than a human? Recently, a major research effort has commenced investigating gratitude to God. Although research has consistently demonstrated that religious/spiritual people tend to be more

grateful [2, 3], gratitude to God appears to be particularly important to spiritual well-being. In a prospective study, Watkins et al. found that trait gratitude to God at time 1 predicted increased religious well-being at time 2, after controlling for baseline levels of religious well-being, Big-5 personality traits, and time 1 trait gratitude [20]. Thus, gratitude to God may prove to be an important variable in the psychology of religion and spirituality.

Although research is still developing in this area, a few observations can be made. In one study, participants were randomly allocated to recall a benefit received from a human benefactor, a benefit they received from God, or a “happy occasion” [21]. In terms of appraisals, gratitude to God looked very much like gratitude to humans. In other words, the same appraisals that predicted gratitude to humans predicted gratitude to God. This study, however, did not assess spiritual appraisals such as whether participants interpreted the benefit as a sacred gift. Thus, future work should emphasize spiritual appraisals to identify the unique appraisal structure of gratitude to God. We look forward to seeing more research in this developing area.

We have seen that gratitude is associated with a distinct appraisal structure. But do these appraisals actually *cause* the emotion of gratitude? Much of appraisal research uses designs that are not able to determine whether these appraisals are cognitive antecedents to the emotion under study. However, cognitive bias modification for interpretation (CBM-I) is a paradigm that can more definitively determine the causal status of the cognitive antecedents of emotion [22]. The cognitive bias modification paradigm typically uses computer tasks to modify target cognitive biases. These tasks involve a number of trials, and if the participant adopts the target bias, this makes the tasks easier for them. In CBM-I, participants are forced to disambiguate scenarios in a positive or negative direction. Initially, CBM-I was used to change interpretation biases related to anxiety and depression [22]. For example, the participant would be presented with a scenario where they are speaking in front of a crowd. The crowd laughs and it is unclear whether they are laughing because they think your speech is funny, or because they think you are foolish. Participants are forced to disambiguate the scenario in either a positive or negative way by completing a word fragment at the end of the scenario (for an example disambiguation trial, see below). CBM-I has been very successful in changing interpretive biases known to underlie anxiety and depression [22]. Moreover, often in these studies changing the participant’s interpretation bias also changes their emotion in the expected direction. Thus, encouraging a positive interpretation bias through the disambiguation trials decreases one’s anxiety. Changing the cognitive bias and one’s subsequent emotion lends more credence to the causal status of interpretation/appraisal biases to emotion [22].

Cognitive bias modification has been used successfully to modify cognitive biases associated with emotional disorders [22], but until recently, this approach has not been used to modify cognitive biases that are thought to be causes of positive emotions. Recently, Watkins and associates [23] used CBM-I in an attempt to modify interpretation biases important to gratitude. Participants were randomly allocated to either grateful or non-grateful disambiguation training using benefit scenarios. Following is one of the disambiguation trials:

You have missed a day of class and when you return to class an acquaintance has copied their notes of the previous lecture for you. Your professor posts all of their PowerPoint slides online, so you wonder why your acquaintance copied their notes for you. In the end, you feel that your friend’s assistance was (c_ _siderate / p_ _ntless)

“Considerate” completes the scenario in a grateful manner, whereas “pointless” was the completion of non-grateful training. Participants in the grateful training find it easier to complete the word fragment with “considerate” if they adopt a grateful interpretation bias.

Training resulted in large effect sizes on grateful interpretation bias. Moreover, compared to non-grateful training, grateful training produced greater gratitude and higher value and altruism appraisals for a benefit of episodic memory. Thus, this study was able to more definitively establish that particular appraisals cause grateful emotion. In short, when an individual appraises an event as “someone has done something important for me,” they will probably experience gratitude.

Research has provided us with useful information as to the cognitive antecedents of state gratitude. Now we turn to the causes of trait or dispositional gratitude. What makes a grateful person? Much could be discussed here about distal causes of trait gratitude (e.g., secure attachment), but here we will focus on more proximal causes of dispositional gratitude. To understand the causes of trait gratitude it is imperative that we comprehend its constituents. We propose the following cognitive characteristics of trait gratitude. First, grateful people should be more prone to noticing blessings in their life. Anecdotally, this is what many who engage in daily counting blessings exercises report: it forces them to look for and notice the good things in their day. Thus, grateful people should have the tendency to look for and notice benefits in their life. Second, grateful people should exhibit a more grateful interpretation style. Those high in dispositional gratitude should value or appreciate benefits that come their way. Given our discussion above, they should also be more likely to appreciate “the goodness of the giver” [10]. They will be more likely to interpret the motivations of their givers in a benevolent way — that the benefits are given simply because their giver wants to enhance their wellbeing. Indeed, research supports this characterization of the interpretation style of grateful people [24, 25]. Third, grateful people should be biased toward recollecting benefits from their past, and research supports this cognitive bias of gratitude [8, 26].

In sum, we have seen that noticing the good, interpreting benefits as being valuable and given by altruistic motives, and reflecting on one’s past in a positive manner are facets that lead a person to be more grateful. It would seem to follow that interventions designed to enhance dispositional gratitude would focus on these facets. But this begs the question: Can a person become more grateful? Although many studies have shown that gratitude exercises enhance happiness, research investigating interventions to improve one’s disposition for gratitude is sparse. In an important seminal study, Froh and colleagues designed an intervention to enhance trait gratitude in youth [27]. This intervention focused on classroom instruction regarding gratitude-relevant appraisals. Compared to the control condition, children in this intervention did exhibit improved grateful thinking and became more grateful, and this improved their emotional well-being.

A few subsequent studies have developed successful interventions to enhance trait gratitude [28, 29]. Thus, we can conclude that people can become more grateful, but much more work in this area is needed. Notably, Baumsteiger et al. [29] focused on developing specific treatments for specific mechanisms of gratitude, and we believe that this will prove to be the best way forward in developing interventions to enhance dispositional gratitude. Following our analysis above, we propose that treatments should focus on three aspects of gratitude: attention (training individuals to notice the good), interpretation (training a grateful appraisal style), and memory (training a positive memory bias). First, we believe that a one or two week daily grateful

recounting exercise is likely to improve attention to benefits [8], but research needs to test this theory. In the cognitive bias modification paradigm research has also focused on modifying attention bias [30]. If one could train individuals to attend to positive information, this should provide the needed positive attention bias for trait gratitude. Most of the interventions described above have focused on encouraging grateful appraisals. This has been successful, but the appraisals are taught in an instructional setting, so more than likely this is training a more deliberative appraisal style. Emotions, however, are more likely to result from automatic than from deliberative appraisals. Thus, although explicit instruction has been shown to be important to dispositional gratitude interventions, we would argue for adding training modules that enhance a more automatic grateful interpretation style, and it is here where CBM-I may add a valuable component to treatment packages designed to enhance dispositional gratitude. Extant research supports the idea that CBM-I can change habitual interpretation biases that are crucial to gratitude.

In sum, what causes trait gratitude? What makes a person more grateful? Enhancing a positive attention bias, a more grateful interpretation style, and a tendency to reflect more positively on one's past should lower one's threshold for gratitude. To date, very few studies have focused on interventions designed to enhance dispositional gratitude. Long-term happiness is not likely to result from a few isolated experiences of gratitude. Rather, it is the disposition of gratitude that is vital to long-term emotional well-being. Thus, we believe that more research should focus on how to enhance the trait of gratitude.

4. The consequences of gratitude: how does gratitude enhance happiness?

We have seen that gratitude—particularly the grateful disposition—is a critical component of the good life. People flourish when they have a grateful orientation to life, which we have defined as seeing all of life as a gift [3, 10]. Given that gratitude supports SWB, researchers have now turned to an important question: How does gratitude enhance happiness? Understanding the mechanisms of the gratitude/happiness relationship is important in several ways. First, understanding why gratitude enhances happiness helps further our understanding of both gratitude and happiness. Through understanding the mechanisms of the gratitude and happiness relationship we will better understand gratitude by seeing its beneficial consequences, and we will better understand happiness because we will see more clearly the specific causes of happiness. Secondly, increasing our understanding of how gratitude increases happiness should help us improve gratitude interventions. If, for example, gratitude enhances happiness because it causes people to value what is good in their life, gratitude interventions could be improved by more specifically instructing participants on how they might psychologically value/appreciate those blessings they might be recounting (e.g., [31]). Thus, we submit that identifying *how* gratitude enhances happiness is vital for the science of gratitude.

Before exploring theories that speak to how gratitude enhances SWB, we discuss some interesting treatment outcome results that we believe provide important hints about the mechanisms of the gratitude/happiness relationship. Although many studies investigating gratitude exercises have been randomized controlled trials (RCTs), only a few have used clear placebo control treatments that have shown placebo effects (i.e., they resulted in increased happiness over the treatment period). Studies that use placebos are important because they allow us to separate the effects of gratitude from

the nonspecific effects of treatment (hope, expectation, etc.). Two of these studies used grateful recounting where participants listed three recent blessings and wrote about them in some way [7, 8]. Participants were instructed to engage in this grateful recounting every day for a week. What was notable about the outcome of both studies is that although the increase in happiness across the 1-week treatment period was similar to the placebo condition, the happiness of those in the placebo condition went back to baseline after the treatment phase (as would be expected), but the SWB of those in the grateful recounting treatment kept increasing well past the treatment phase. Indeed, in both studies, the trajectory of happiness was still increasing at the last follow-up assessment. In the case of the Seligman et al. study [7], this was fully 6 months after the treatment phase. This pattern of results is not uncommon in positive psychology interventions (e.g., [32]) but is generally unheard of in clinical psychology outcome studies, where the typical pattern is improved well-being across the treatment phase, with emotional well-being progressively decreasing after treatment.

Why did happiness continue to increase after the one-week gratitude treatment? It did not appear to be due to participants continuing to count their blessings on their own, because participants in the Watkins et al. study [8] reported that they stopped the grateful recounting exercise immediately at the close of the one-week treatment phase. Thus, daily counting blessings for 1 week must have changed some psychological processes that continued to enhance SWB well after treatment. One more aspect of the Watkins et al. study should be highlighted [8]. They compared the grateful recounting intervention with two comparison groups: placebo and pride 3-blessings treatment. The pride 3-blessings treatment was exactly like the gratitude 3-blessings treatment in that participants recalled 3 “good things” that had happened to them in the last 48 hours, whereas in the gratitude 3-blessing treatment they wrote about how each thing made them feel more grateful, in the pride 3-blessings treatment they wrote about how each “good thing” made them “feel better than others or better than average.” The authors included this condition to isolate grateful processing. In previous counting blessings studies, it was not possible to determine if the effect of counting blessings on SWB was because it was activating grateful processing, or it was merely that recalling good things in one’s life improved one’s happiness. Watkins and associates found that the gratitude 3-blessings treatment outperformed both the placebo and the pride 3-blessings treatment in improving happiness. Thus, it appears that grateful processing is a critical mechanism for improving one’s happiness. In short, these findings suggest that a one-week daily practice of grateful recounting changes people in a way that results in increasing happiness. What changed? Clearly, it was a change related to grateful processing, and we believe that it trained individuals to notice and appreciate the good in their life [33]. We now turn to theories that have attempted to explain how gratitude enhances emotional well-being.

Three theories attempt to explain how gratitude might improve SWB: Fredrickson’s broaden and build theory [34], Algor’s find, remind, and bind theory [35], and our amplification theory of gratitude [10, 36]. We find these theories complimentary rather than competitive, and together, should help us understand the gratitude and SWB relationship.

Fredrickson’s broaden and build theory of positive emotion provides a good explanation of how gratitude supports SWB. Her theory was an attempt to explain why we experience positive emotions, and how they help us adapt [34]. According to Fredrickson, positive emotions broaden one’s momentary thought/action repertoire and build personal resources for future well-being. Whereas negative emotions are focused, positive emotions broaden one’s scope of attention, cognition, and action.

For example, whereas indebtedness (a negative emotion) might motivate us to a sort of tit-for-tat response to a benefit (e.g., “I will have you over for dinner because you had me for dinner”), gratitude for a benefit would lead one to creatively consider many ways of responding to one’s benefactor [37]. Indeed, research supports her theory as it applies to gratitude: whereas gratitude is correlated with more thought/action tendencies, indebtedness is not [38]. Being more creative when one is returning a favor is likely to result in a more enjoyable experience with one’s benefactor, and hence should improve one’s SWB.

Not only do positive emotions broaden in the moment, but according to Fredrickson they also build personal resources for the future. Fredrickson proposes that positive emotions like gratitude build personal resources in at least three ways: they build physical, intellectual, and social resources. It is easy to see how gratitude might build one’s social resources. People like grateful people [2] and expressions of gratitude result in many social benefits. Perceived social support is one of the most robust correlates of happiness [39], thus, as gratitude builds social resources, so it should build one’s happiness.

Building on the foundation of broaden and build theory, Algoe developed her find, remind, and bind theory of gratitude [35]. She argues that gratitude enhances well-being through building one’s social resources. Gratitude helps one *find* new relationships that support SWB, it *reminds* one of those relationships that are important to flourishing, and it helps *bind* relationships to support long-term happiness. We see this as a very effective theory for explaining how gratitude enhances happiness. Algoe’s research has garnered considerable support for her model [40–42], and it has added the approach of relationship science to the study of gratitude. As gratitude is essentially an “other-focused” emotion, we see this as a necessary perspective.

We have attempted to integrate these theories by proposing that gratitude enhances SWB because it psychologically amplifies the good in one’s life [10, 36]. Psychologically, gratitude serves to amplify the signal strength of blessings. Just as an amplifier augments the sound going into a microphone, so too gratitude amplifies the good in one’s life. Just as a magnifying glass enlarges the text it is focused on, so too gratitude magnifies blessing. The amplification theory of gratitude proposes that gratitude enhances the signal strength of who and what is beneficial in one’s life. When one is keenly aware of what is beneficial for them, they will spend more of their personal resources seeking these things, which should enhance SWB. This is important for one’s happiness because psychologically speaking, “Bad is stronger than good” [43]. Research has shown that bad emotions, bad feedback, bad memories, and bad interactions tend to take precedence over the good. Thus, even though most people experience far more pleasant than unpleasant events in their life, it is easy to let the bad drown out the good. Gratitude, however, helps overcome this psychological bias by amplifying the good.

How does gratitude amplify the good in life? Gratitude amplifies blessings in that people enjoy benefits more when they experience them with gratitude [44]. Second, gratitude amplifies the good in one’s past. Several studies have shown that grateful people recall more blessings from their past, and when these memories do come to mind, they enjoy them more than less grateful people [8, 26]. Moreover, one experiment showed that gratitude can even amplify the good one sees in unpleasant memories [32]. Third, research supports the idea that gratitude amplifies the good in one’s relationships. Indeed, Algoe’s research provides robust support for this aspect of amplification theory [35]. Moreover, research by DeSteno and Bartlett has shown that inducing gratitude produces significant prosocial behavior, both toward the

benefactor and strangers [45–47]. Indeed, gratitude encourages prosocial behavior even when it costs the beneficiary to provide the help. Thus, gratitude appears to amplify one's desire to do good to others. Clearly, this should improve one's relationships, which is one of the most important causes of SWB [39]. In sum, we propose that gratitude enhances happiness because it amplifies the good in one's life. Gratitude amplifies the good from one's past, it amplifies the good in how one experiences blessings in the present, and it amplifies the good in one's future by increasing hope [6]. Finally, gratitude amplifies the good in life by amplifying our desire to do good to others, thus enhancing our relationships and subsequently our SWB.

5. Who benefits from gratitude interventions?

We have seen that gratitude is a critical component of human flourishing and that it appears to enhance well-being by amplifying blessings. The most convincing evidence for the importance of gratitude to happiness comes from experimental work that manipulates gratitude exercises. Some of these studies have looked at who benefits most from exercises such as counting your blessings, and here we find some surprising—and informative—results. For example, men appear to benefit more from grateful recounting than women [8]. We found this surprising result because women tend to be higher than men in dispositional gratitude [2, 3], and tend to value gratitude more than men [48]. Indeed, we found that women tend to enjoy gratitude exercises more than men [8]. Surprisingly, we found that reports of how much people enjoyed the daily gratitude 3-blessings exercise were negatively correlated with how much they gained from the practice in terms of SWB at the 5-week follow-up. In other words, those who enjoyed counting their blessings least gained most in terms of their happiness. Finally, several studies have found that trait gratitude moderates the effects of counting blessings on happiness [8, 49]. Again, to our surprise, those who were least grateful tended to gain most from counting their blessings. How can we make sense of these somewhat counterintuitive results? In our view, the critical finding relates to dispositional gratitude: those who were least grateful, benefited most in terms of their happiness. This helps us understand why men benefitted more from the gratitude intervention than women because men tend to be less grateful than women. Furthermore, it makes sense that those who least enjoyed grateful recounting benefitted the most because we would expect that those low in trait gratitude would have more difficulty with the 3-blessings exercise, and thus would have enjoyed it less. How can we make sense of these findings? Very simply, those who benefit most from gratitude have the most to gain from gratitude.

We believe that there is an important lesson for the science of happiness in these findings. Some in the positive psychology movement have claimed that it is important that the various positive psychology exercises fit the individual who is attempting to use them. There is undoubtedly some truth in this claim, although it is sometimes used to argue that “If the exercise doesn't feel good to you then it probably isn't for you.” Based on the findings above, this appears to be wrongheaded advice. What if a medical professional provided the following recommendation to an overweight person: “If exercising doesn't feel good to you, it probably won't be useful to you.” Indeed, to achieve many things in life we must engage in something unpleasant to achieve our goal. And so it is with gratitude. Those who are least grateful have most to gain from gratitude exercises, just as those who are most out of shape have most to gain from physical exercise. But for one who is low in dispositional gratitude, engaging in

gratitude exercises is not likely to be very pleasant, at least initially. In other words, becoming more grateful is not likely to be an easy, completely pleasant process. In the words of St. John of the Cross (cited in [50], p. 17): “To come to the pleasure you have not you must go by a way in which you enjoy not.” In sum, those who benefit most from gratitude have the most to gain from gratitude.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter, we have attempted to describe the causes and consequences of gratitude. After establishing that gratitude enhances happiness, we described some of the known causes of state and trait gratitude. We argued for an appraisal approach to gratitude: people experience the emotion of gratitude when they appraise a situation as indicating that someone has done something important for them. In the investigation of the cognitive antecedents of gratitude, we proposed that the cognitive bias modification paradigm might be particularly helpful. We also discussed other cognitive antecedents that impact gratitude and concluded that more research should be devoted to the nature of the benefactor. In this regard, we find that gratitude to God is a particularly interesting and significant variety of gratitude that should be explored. Although we know less about the causes of trait than state gratitude, we proposed interventions that encourage individuals to look for the good in their life, interpret benefits in a benevolent manner (appraisal training), and reflect in a positive way on their past, should encourage dispositional gratitude.

We then described three theories that help us understand how gratitude enhances SWB: Fredrickson’s broaden and build theory [34, 37], Algoe’s find, remind, and bind theory [35], and our amplification theory of gratitude [10, 36]. Finally, we explored who gains most from gratitude interventions, and concluded that those who most need gratitude gain the most from gratitude interventions.

In sum, we have seen that gratitude is a critical component of the good life. Research overwhelmingly supports the idea that gratitude enhances happiness. We conclude with a quote from W. J. Cameron:

It is literally true, as the thankless say, that they have nothing to be thankful for. He who sits by the fire, thankless for the fire, is just as if he had no fire. Nothing is possessed save in appreciation, of which thankfulness is the indispensable ingredient. But a thankful heart hath a continual feast.

Indeed, without gratitude, it is difficult to see how one could be very happy. As the epigram by Bonhoeffer emphasized, gratitude makes life rich [1]. We conclude that gratitude builds one’s happiness because it amplifies the good in one’s life.

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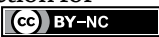
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Selected Well-Being Interventions for Hybrid-Working Employees

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Abstract

This chapter proposes four distinct techniques to boost subjective well-being, also called happiness, tailored for hybrid-working employees. These techniques suggested here are as follows: 1) selected goal-setting techniques around the ‘why of goal pursuit’ with a particular focus on self-concordance and approaching/avoidance driven goal strivings, 2) job crafting/leisure crafting, 3) acts of kindness and 4) gratitude exercises. The chapter discusses each technique on its merits by reviewing the related literature, and how they can be useful in boosting people’s subjective well-being for employees who are predominantly working in a hybrid format, and therefore, their experiences at work as well as at home impact strongly on their subjective well-being.

Keywords: goal setting, job crafting, acts of kindness, intervention techniques, subjective well-being, happiness

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has made a lasting impact on the way we work. A recent survey by the Office for National Statistics [1] revealed that most employees (84%) in Great Britain, who worked from home because of the pandemic, plan to work from home and in the workplace (‘hybrid work’) in the future. Similarly, recent survey data from Ireland indicates that 88% of employees who can work remotely would like to keep doing so [2], and over 80% of respondents in an international survey report that the hybrid working format is an important aspect of future employment decisions [3]. Organisations need to respond to these future remote work intentions, and at the same time address how they can best balance their needs and those of their staff. The pandemic has accelerated this process and has sparked a lively debate on the issues of remote working and the organisations’ ability to develop effective hybrid workplace policies [4]. While there are good reasons for employees to come back to their formal workplace, the pandemic has demonstrated that employees can get their work done from home and that hybrid working is likely to stay. However, in the long term, hybrid working is expected to contribute to the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life [5, 6]. The blurring of these boundaries poses a threat to a healthy work-life balance as employees find it increasingly difficult to rest from work,

either physically or mentally [4, 7, 8]. To address and mitigate these issues, we propose effective techniques to boost the subjective well-being of hybrid-working employees to support and maintain a healthy work-life balance. In doing so, this chapter contributes to the positive psychology literature by identifying techniques that are equally effective in the workplace and in the personal life domains, and therefore, addressing employees as human beings as a whole for example done by Foucault and Hadot and their spiritual exercises [9]. Although Hadot and Foucault conceptualise and interpret spiritual exercises differently, their account of spiritual exercises is useful as it allows modern-day hybrid-working employees to transform and take care of the self [10]. For example, spiritual exercises can help hybrid-working employees reflect upon the practical or existential issues in life in a philosophical way, and this will help them better understand themselves, identify opportunities for improvement, and gain inner peace and tranquillity [11]—which undoubtedly will boost their well-being. While spiritual exercises are meaningful, they tend to be practised individually and the remainder of this chapter will consider exercises that promote engagement with colleagues and others.

Focusing on techniques that are effective in both work and personal life domains is crucial because they are likely to be the most effective since the working and private spaces are intertwined for employees who work in a hybrid format. Therefore, identifying practical techniques to boost well-being which is equally effective for people's professional as well as personal lives is now more important than ever. This chapter proposes four distinct, contemporary and established techniques to boost well-being [12]. By focusing on both the working and private life domains, this chapter also extends the field to a non-working environment, such as leisure. Leisure scholars show that engagement with leisure activities also promotes well-being [13], which has clear linkages to Therapeutic Recreation Practice [14]. The four techniques selected have been shown to significantly boost people's well-being, in both a professional setting and the personal life domain.

- Selected goal-setting techniques around the 'why of goal pursuit'
- Job crafting/leisure crafting
- Acts of kindness
- Gratitude exercises

The four techniques are aimed at increasing people's subjective well-being, also referred to as happiness [15]; also, according to Diener ([15], p. 108) the term happiness 'because of its varied popular meaning as it might refer to the global experience of well-being, the current feeling of joy or to the experience of much positive affect over time.' Subjective well-being is, however, clearly defined and characterised as a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of their life [16]. The cognitive component typically refers to people's positive evaluative judgements of their life (i.e., life satisfaction), whereas the affective component typically refers to the frequent experience of positive affect and the absence of negative affect [17]. Subjective well-being is a distinct form within the wider concept of well-being, which has been conceptualised and measured in different ways ranging from psychological well-being [18], physical well-being [19] or social well-being [20].

2. Selected goal-setting techniques around the ‘why of goal pursuit’

Setting goals plays a major role at work (e.g. career development, promotion, qualifications) and in our private life (e.g. marriage, house, children). People constantly pursue goals, even subconsciously [21], and research in idiographic personal goal setting has become a rich tradition within personality psychology [22]. A ‘goal’ typically refers to the desired end state [23], yet the pursuit of goal can be recognised as one of the most effective happiness-increasing strategies, due to its positive effect on personal life and work performance outcomes [24]. However, not all goals are considered to be of equal importance to people’s subjective well-being. Some goals are more effective in improving people’s well-being than others because they better channel or express a person’s interests, values, talents, needs and motives [22]. When goals are not related to a person’s interests or needs, they are less likely to increase subjective well-being and, in some instances, they might even cause harm [25]. Hence, it is important to understand what kind of goal characteristics contribute best to people’s subjective well-being and understand how they are appropriate for the attainment of both work-related and personal goals.

Several studies have shown that there are differences in the reasons why people pursue their most important goals and how this impacts their well-being [26–28]. The question to what degree people strive for their most important goals applies equally to their professional, as well as their personal goals [22, 25]. An important prerequisite to setting happiness-related goals, either professional or personal, is that they are self-concordant [28]. Self-concordant goal pursuit is hereby defined as striving for a goal based on self-determined choice, whereas a non-self-concordant goal pursuit, or controlled goal pursuit, is when people strive for their goals due to external reasons and beyond internal self-choice. Typically, this represents some outside force where people feel compelled to pursue a goal because of some form of external pressure. Studies show that high levels of self-concordance are associated with a variety of positive outcomes, one of which is increased subjective well-being [25, 28]. Given the significant impact of self-concordant goal pursuit on increased happiness, a range of interventions has been developed. Most of these interventions have a strong focus on the provision of an autonomous supportive environment to help people develop self-concordant goals. For example, research [29] suggests the following specific behaviours that are linked to self-concordant goals of employees in the workplace, namely the following: asking open questions and inviting others to address problems; active listening and acknowledging the employees’ perspective; offering choices within the organisational structure and clarifying responsibilities; providing constructive, factual and non-judgemental feedback that acknowledges initiative; minimising coercive controls, such as rewards and comparisons with others; developing talent and sharing knowledge to enhance competence and autonomy.

Other scholars identified concepts such as transformational leadership [30] or executive coaching [31] to help employees develop self-concordant goals at work. We argue that some of these techniques to develop self-concordance are equally appropriate for personal goals and would be effective for those who work in a hybrid format. For example, Burton [32] indicates that when people set goals, they tend to follow their gut instead of being rational about it, which suggests greater levels of self-concordance [22]. Self-concordance is also linked to higher levels of trait mindfulness, which suggests that those who practise mindfulness and listen to their inner self more carefully tend to be more successful in setting self-concordant goals. Studies in sports

also found that athletes who have been coached in an autonomy-supportive way (i.e., enabling choice and agency) report higher levels of self-concordance [33] and equally where people were pursuing more recreational sports activities [34].

Another effective approach to help people strive for their most important goals in a happiness-increasing way is delineated by the goal-striving reasons framework [26, 35–37]. Unlike self-concordance theory, the goal-striving reason framework measures the degree to which people’s goal reasons are underpinned by approach rather than avoidance reasons, which is an important distinction that has been shown to be strongly related to people’s well-being [38]. The distinction here is that people who predominantly set approaching goals (i.e., moving towards a desirable outcome) show higher levels of subjective well-being than people who set avoidance-driven goals (i.e., goal is motivated to avoid an undesirable outcome). The goal-striving reasons framework applies the notion of approach and avoidance-driven motivation to the reasons why people pursue their most important goals. In essence, the goal-striving reasons framework promotes the pursuit of goals for approach reasons such as pleasure or enjoyment and for altruistic reasons (i.e., helping others, making the world a better place), and discourages people to strive for their goals out of avoidance reasons such as for self-esteem reasons or out of necessity (i.e., I have to do it otherwise I am in trouble).

The goal-striving reasons framework has been converted to a multi-component happiness intervention entitled ‘Happiness through Goal Setting’ [27], whereby people are equipped with the relevant tools and insights to modify their goal reasons into more happiness-increasing ones. The intervention has been effective in both person and online [39], which is vital as many hybrid-working employees depend on online interactions with their colleagues. The ‘Happiness through Goal Setting’ intervention is equally applicable to people’s personal as well as professional goals. The following exercises are the key elements of the training for each of the four goal-striving reasons (see **Table 1**). For a more detailed description of these exercises refer to Ehrlich and Milston [27].

Pleasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match your goals to your heart (goals/implicit motive fit) based on research on goals/implicit motive fit [40, 41]. • Do something fun on a regular basis (keep a fun diary) based on the broaden-and-build theory and the importance of positivity [42].
Altruism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in acts of kindness based on acts of kindness studies [43]. • Reflect on the positive impact of your goals based on research around cognitive job crafting [44].
Self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce goal-striving for ego reasons through increased self-compassion based on the research by Neff [45]. • Developing Learning goals based on research on learning goals by Dweck and Leggett [46].
Necessity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid doing things out of necessity in relation to your most important goals and therefore reducing our desire to accumulate material wealth based on research around materialism and subjective well-being [47]. • Reduce social comparison based on research that shows the negative impact of social comparison on subjective well-being [48].

Table 1.
Goal striving reasons and relevant interventions within the Happiness through Goal Setting approach.

3. Job crafting/leisure crafting

Another important happiness-increasing intervention for hybrid-working employees is job crafting. Job crafting acknowledges the fact that employees proactively shape their tasks around their needs and wishes, which can be done at the workplace, at home or virtually. Slemp and Vella-Brodrick [49] claim that job crafting is a promising yet relatively unexplored approach that employees can use to boost their well-being. Job crafting can be executed on three different levels: 1) task level (e.g. changing the nature or scope of the task), 2) relationship level (e.g. deciding how and with whom to collaborate) and 3) cognitive level (e.g. reframing the meaning and purpose of certain tasks to create more meaningful work). Various job crafting examples have been put forward [50] and these would work equally well for hybrid-working employees. One of the most influential job crafting studies was conducted by Wrzesniewski, Dutton and Debebe [44] who showed that some of the cleaning staff in a hospital actively crafted their jobs to make their jobs more meaningful. Those active crafting activities ranged from talking to patients to comfort them, helping relatives of patients find their way around the hospital or even changing the environment for patients in coma to provide a more stimulating atmosphere, which was believed to help with their recovery. All of those activities were not in their job description, but this group of cleaning staff did it anyway to find a higher purpose within their job. Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton [51] present a variety of practical examples of what job crafting can look like on a task, relationship and cognitive level. One of the examples of task crafting (changing the scope/nature of tasks) is quoted from Berg et al. ([51], p. 166):

“I really enjoy online tools and Internet things . . . So I’ve really tailored that aspect of the written job description, and really “upped” it, because I enjoy it. I spend hours exploring what else we’re paying for with this service . . . So it gives me an opportunity to play around and explore with tools and web applications, and I get to learn, which is one of my favorite things to do. (Associate/Coordinator #3, Non-Profit)”

Some scholars also developed relevant job crafting training interventions. For example, Van de Heuvel and associates [52] created a short training intervention (4 weeks) based on the Job Demands-Resource model, which asks participants to reflect on their demands and resources at work to shape their work environment in a way that increases resources and decreases demands. This resulted in a personal crafting plan with self-chosen job crafting goals.

The concept of ‘crafting’ has also been successfully applied to leisure time. One reason for this is the fact that some job roles leave relatively little space for job crafting because of a high degree of standardisation of tasks or a negative organisational culture where crafting activities are not encouraged [49]. Leisure crafting is characterised by Petrou et al. [53] as a technique to help people structure their leisure time according to three core principles 1) goal setting, 2) learning and 3) human connections. By applying these three core principles to a hobby or leisure activity, people can obtain more meaning from their leisure time, which contributes more effectively to their well-being. Research on the effects of leisure crafting as well as relevant training interventions are emerging and so far, only a handful of leisure crafting studies are available [53]. Despite this, leisure crafting is likely to become an influential technique to increase subjective well-being, in particular for those who feel that job crafting for them is limited. A variety of training courses are available for job crafting and leisure crafting [52].

4. Acts of kindness

Performing acts of kindness is gaining more and more importance as an intervention technique that enhances people's well-being—be it at work or elsewhere [43]. Acts of kindness are commonly defined as 'voluntary, intentional behaviours that benefit another and are not motivated by external factors such as rewards or punishment' ([54], p. 63). There is now a substantial body of literature demonstrating how acts of kindness could be performed to be beneficial to one's well-being and how to make them more effective.

It is generally recommended that people avoid taking the approach to 'be kind to others as much as I can', but rather identify how to be kind to others to obtain the greatest personal happiness boost from their actions. Furthermore, performing different acts of kindness has been shown to boost happiness more than performing similar acts of kindness repeatedly—so variety is key [43]. The frequency and timing of people's acts of kindness are important as well. Research shows that performing several acts of kindness in one day increases happiness more than performing a daily single act of kindness throughout an entire week [53]. Dunn, Aknin and Norton [55] show that the size of your kind action does not seem to matter. For example, gifting \$5 or \$20 does not make a significant difference with regard to their own happiness benefits.

However, receiving feedback on how one's act of kindness has been perceived by the recipient typically increases the happiness of the giver. Another strand of research has shown that the act of kindness needs to be genuine, which means it needs to be heartfelt rather than a mechanical, cold act. This obviously differs from person to person, and what is an authentic, heartfelt act of kindness for one person might be a more or less meaningless act for another person. So, investing time to understand what the beneficiary appreciates helps in preparing appropriate acts of kindness. However, for those who work remotely, getting to know colleagues can be challenging, since most online meetings offer limited time for casual conversations, including compliments and act of kindness. The occasional corridor or water fountain chats have become rare, so it is important to find time and plan for them. For example, hybrid-working employees can create 'kindness rounds', where colleagues are encouraged to compliment and acknowledge each other's success and achievements [56]. Research also suggests that the happiness-boosting effect of an act of kindness can be increased if people see the positive impact of their actions on others [55]. Finally, remembering one's acts of kindness can also have happiness-boosting effect of equal strength to performing the actual act of kindness itself [57].

Given the nature of this intervention technique, it seems self-explanatory that acts of kindness could be performed at work as well as in private life domain. This is especially important as positive effects in one domain also have positive spill-over effects in other domains [42]. Hybrid-working employees can be kind to one another by, for example, holding the door open, offering advice or providing a compliment both at work and in their private lives. Sometimes, all this can happen without being aware of it. However, as previously explained, acknowledging the acts of kindness, remembering and focusing on the positive impact of their actions on others can boost people's well-being [55, 57].

5. Gratitude exercises

Gratitude exercises have been identified as an important happiness-increasing intervention technique and have been found effective in a number of different

settings including at work and in one's personal life [50, 58]. Peterson and Seligman ([59], p. 30) define gratitude as 'being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen, taking time to express thanks'. The components of gratitude are numerous and include behaviours, emotions and cognitive elements [60]. Gratitude exercises and associated interventions have been found effective in boosting well-being across different age groups and professions, from college students [61] to soldiers [62].

Gratitude exercises are flexible and can be performed with various people (friends, colleagues, neighbours) in a range of different places—onsite and online. Gratitude exercises are recognised as another important technique to increase subjective well-being, and they are useful in various life domains. According to Wood, Froh and Geraghty [63], there are three main types of gratitude exercises: the gratitude list, grateful contemplation and behavioural expression of gratitude. The first refers to writing a list of things for which one is grateful. Ideally, this is done on a regular and daily basis. The second exercise, grateful contemplation refers to a short intervention that can boost positive mood in the short run. The exercise encourages people to think and reflect upon the things they are grateful for. Finally, the behavioural expression of gratitude refers to the act of expressing gratitude to someone, which can be done in writing or in person [63].

The three gratitude exercises could all be applied by hybrid-working employees. For instance, a meeting (both with colleagues and with friends) could start by creating a gratitude list and sharing positive thoughts. Here, the gratitude intervention can be verbal, with the use of gratitude affirmations. Another gratitude exercise is thanking people, which could be verbal or written. Some behavioural expressions of gratitude could be writing gratitude notes to both colleagues and friends. Other simple gratitude behaviours could be smiling to acknowledge someone's presence and asking them about their day. Another well-recognised way to practise gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal where the entries act as reflections of what the writer is grateful for. Gratefulness journaling can increase people's positive emotions and improve their personal growth and accomplishments [60]. It can also strengthen friendships and social relationships [64], and stimulate engagement in prosocial behaviours, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic [65]. According to scholars, this gratitude intervention can increase people's empathy and affect, and in turn, their well-being [65]. There is evidence showing that the perceived friendship quality, generated by gratitude journals, can also create long-term life satisfaction [64]. Gratitude exercises also encourage collaboration along with prosocial and moral behaviour, and research shows that those who received expressions of gratitude are more likely to help others in return [66] and that it can reduce depression [67]. Gratitude exercises are most effective when they are varied, performed daily and regularly over an extended period of time, and they are more pronounced when combined with other positive psychology interventions [58]. Overall, appreciating what we have is the key and such reflections boost well-being.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter proposed effective techniques to boost the subjective well-being of hybrid-working employees to support and maintain a healthy work-life balance. In doing so, this chapter generates greater awareness of these techniques and adds to the positive psychology literature by identifying techniques that are equally effective in the formal workplace and in personal life domains. Organisations and

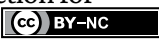
employers should first identify what a healthy work-life balance looks like and design policies to sustain this. The four identified techniques could form part of such policies to support a healthy work-life balance and improve well-being among employees who opt for hybrid working arrangements. Focusing on the techniques that are effective in both work and life domains is crucial because they are likely to be the most effective since our work and private lives are currently so blurred. The four techniques: 1. selected goal-setting techniques around the 'why of goal pursuit'; 2. job crafting/leisure crafting; 3. acts of kindness; 4. gratitude exercises, represent the latest developments in the field of Positive Psychology and were found to be effective in the workplace as well as in people's personal life. Further studies should investigate other types of well-being interventions, especially those outside the formal workplace, such as leisure activities. We also call for studies to demonstrate which techniques are more effective in enhancing subjective well-being over a longer period of time. Furthermore, research should also focus on interventions for specific age groups, such as older people or young adults in particular working contexts as well. This will advance our understanding of the most appropriate techniques for specific age groups of hybrid-working employees.

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Measuring Well-Being in School and University: Approaches and Challenges

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Abstract

Measurement of students' well-being has become a significant issue as the paradigm of education outcomes has switched from just academic achievement to a holistic personal development. Nowadays different approaches to assess and to describe well-being in different age groups and contexts exist. All of them have some strengths and limitations that will be discussed in the following chapter. There are some major challenges that researchers and practitioners are facing: the amount of information that could be provided by existing instruments, the possibility to compare results in well-being dynamics, and the ways of presenting results to the participants and institutions for practice improvement. Addressing these approaches and challenges, we are going to discuss international research and practices as well as our own experience of well-being large-scale assessment. Some decisions for research and practice will be provided.

Keywords: measurement, well-being, feedback, students

1. Introduction

Studies of subjective well-being of students are becoming in great demand from different parties of the educational process. This makes the question of its correct measurement especially relevant. In this chapter, we aim to describe the different types of instruments that are used to measure students' well-being. We will also address the topic of feedback and give recommendations for choosing an instrument. In order to do this, we first need to discuss how the term "well-being" is used and what definition we will use in the context of our chapter. The brief review about what is already known about the students' well-being will be presented.

1.1 Definitions of subjective well-being

Nowadays a lot of policymakers and researchers focus on the topic of well-being. It is widely studied within various scientific fields—psychology, sociology, economics, education, and others. That is why there is some misunderstanding and sometimes misuse of the term due to transferring from one scientific field to another without preserving the original meaning. It led to the situation where several terms can be

used to describe well-being, namely: well-being, subjective well-being, psychological well-being, happiness, mental health, quality of life, and others.

To systematize ideas about well-being, the objective and subjective well-being can be distinguished. In this case, objective well-being will mean indicators of the quality of life, such as income, level of education, health, and others. Usually, these aspects of well-being are in the focus of economics and sociology. However, over time, the concept of quality of life began to acquire an increasingly subjective color, especially at an individual level, including such indicators as mental and physical health based on the results of self-reports [1]. Gradually, the focus of the researchers shifted to the person and his or her perception of him(her)self.

The concept of mental health is more often used in health psychology in monitoring studies that aim to highlight health risks. Usually, to measure mental health, the depression and anxiety scales are used. However, characteristics of relationships with others and general life satisfaction are often added to the description of mental health. Despite similar indicators, mental health cannot be attributed to subjective well-being, since mental health focuses more on risks and factors of "ill-being," while subjective well-being is rather opposed to negative experiences and affect. When studying subjective well-being, the main emphasis is made on evaluating subjective experiences, a global assessment of one's life as a whole or in a specific context (for example, work, school, etc.).

In the second half of the twentieth century, researchers began to discuss the concept of happiness. Within the framework of positive psychology happiness is not only about overcoming the deficits that person has, but an independent state with its own factors [2]. Terms happiness and well-being in some studies could be used as synonyms, yet well-being is a broader concept [3]. Happiness is a subjective state of the most pronounced positive emotions [4]. In this understanding, happiness is just the highest level of subjective well-being. The development of the research on happiness, in particular, the development of various measuring instruments led to the emergence of a three-component model of subjective well-being, which includes life satisfaction, positive and negative affect [5-7].

There are two main approaches to consider subjective well-being: hedonistic and eudemonistic. In the framework of the eudemonistic approach, well-being is considered from the standpoint of the completeness of self-realization. Within the framework of the eudemonistic approach, the Ryff model of psychological well-being [8] has received the most widespread use. Psychological well-being is described in terms of aspects of positive functioning such as purposeful engagement in life, realization of personal talents and capacities, and enlightened self-knowledge [9]. Psychological well-being includes the following components: autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relationships, and personal growth. However, the concept of "psychological well-being" is often used in a broader context, for example, to describe mental health, satisfaction, general emotional state, essentially making it synonymous with subjective well-being [10].

The hedonistic approach considers subjective well-being as the individual's subjective belief that his life is pleasant and good [11]. In this chapter, we will follow this approach of subjective well-being, since it has a lot of empirical evidence. Based on this model, a large number of instruments and indices have been developed. Traditionally, within the model of subjective well-being in the hedonistic approach, there are cognitive and emotional components: life satisfaction, positive and negative affect [5-7].

Thus, subjective well-being is the broadest concept that somehow combines all the aspects discussed above and implies some subjective experience and assessment by the individual him (her)self. In order to provide a broader perspective, we will consider the dimension not only of happiness, but also in a wider sense of subjective well-being.

1.2 Subjective well-being and achievements

Today, a rare international study both aimed at adults (European Value Survey) and children (the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children, HSBC; Program for International Students Assessment, PISA; Survey on Social and Emotional Skills, SSES) does not include an assessment of subjective well-being. It finally fixes this concept on the research agenda.

Initially, research on subjective well-being focused mainly on adults, and as a result, we know quite a lot about the subjective well-being characteristics for the adult population. For example, there is evidence about relationships between subjective well-being and various life outcomes, such as income and career achievement, health (including mental health), relationships with partners and friends [12–14].

The emergence of the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale [15], designed to assess subjective well-being in various areas of life, has stimulated research into the domain of children and adolescents. For children an important area of research, by analogy with adults, has become the study of the relationships between subjective well-being and academic achievement of students. This reflects one of the approaches to understanding the role of well-being in education, when well-being is seen as a tool for achieving future results.

Studies on schoolchildren of different age groups show positive relationships between academic achievement and subjective well-being [16–20], but this relationship, although statistically significant, is not strong. Another study showed that students with very low levels of academic achievement show significantly lower levels of school satisfaction than their more successful peers, but found no difference in affect levels between them [21].

Some studies show an association between grades and subjective well-being but find no such association with standardized test scores [22]. This is probably due to the fact that the grades obtained in the class are more significant for the formation of the child's ideas about him or herself, as well as his or her position in the class, than objective achievements measured by standardized tests, which aim to compare the results of the child with the corresponding population. At the same time, a standardized test is a more reliable indicator of a child's real level of achievement, and therefore the question of the significance of a child's real knowledge and skills for the formation of subjective well-being remains open. Kleinkorres and colleagues analyzed reciprocal relationships between students' well-being and academic achievement in primary school and found a positive relationship between life satisfaction in grade 5 and achievement in grade 7, but a negative relationship with achievement in grade 9, indicating that the relationship between subjective well-being and academic achievement may be more complex [23].

Therefore, despite the fact that research has found a significant relationship between well-being and academic achievement, this relationship is rather weak, which actually speaks in favor of schools, as it shows that children in school can feel happy in many ways, regardless of their academic success.

Research in higher education often focuses on freshmen: students who have just made the transition from school to university [24–26]. Several factors that could decrease the level of subjective well-being among freshmen were highlighted in different studies. Those factors are increasing amount of academic workload, examinations (e.g. [27–30]), new social and academic environment [31], the beginning of an independent life, and the need to organize and lead it [25]. For countries where higher education is paid, the need to pay for the education (which means financial support from the family or independent search for funds, including taking loans) also affects subjective well-being of a student at the start of their learning and could be a strong stress factor that can reduce it [24]. Researchers describe the factors that lead to decline in subjective well-being of students in the context of adaptation and their future academic achievements: studies showed that students who successfully adapt to the new social and academic environments achieve better results and are more likely to receive the desired degree. In the same study, it was found that 75% of dropouts attributed their problems to unsuccessful adaptation during their first year [32].

In the later stages of higher education, the subjective well-being of students is mainly considered as the absence of negative characteristics, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, sleep disorders, problems with social adaptation, etc. [33–37]. Questions about subjective perception of quality of life, satisfaction with social relationships, etc., are usually added to such sociological measurements, but they play a role of only supplementing information about health and awareness of a healthy lifestyle [38]. However, some researchers still use a hedonistic approach and identify positive factors associated with successful adaptation and further study of a student at a university [24, 39]. Studies of university and college students still are more focused on identifying negative factors that could threaten subjective well-being: both academic stress and the negative behavior of the students themselves. In higher education research, to a lesser extent, there are studies related to positive factors that contribute to the increase in subjective well-being [24].

In education today, we can see a paradigm shift where personal development and well-being are becoming as important indicators of school performance as academic achievement and student well-being are gradually becoming crucial in its own right [40]. In this regard, there is a growing body of research that focuses on understanding what factors within education will contribute to higher levels of students' subjective well-being. One such factor that can be a resource for subjective well-being is the development of social and emotional skills. Studies of the effectiveness of various social and emotional learning (SEL) programs indicate consistent improvements in subjective well-being over the course of the programs [41]. Moreover, for the first time in the line of large-scale assessment in education organized by OECD, a study appeared entirely devoted to the social and emotional skills of students, which, among other things, included a section on subjective well-being [42].

2. Measurement of subjective well-being in children and adolescents

2.1 Age dynamic of subjective well-being

Research about adult well-being and the availability of measurement instruments that were rapidly becoming widely used was also stimulating interest in the study of well-being in children and adolescents. In 1991, by analogy with the Life Satisfaction Scale by Diener [43], the first questionnaire for assessing overall life satisfaction was

created specifically for children and adolescents (the instrument is supposed to be used for children from 8 years old and older) [44]; Student's life Satisfaction Scale. A little later, in 1994, Huebner introduced another instrument, the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale, which assesses satisfaction with various areas of a child's life: family, friends, self, school, and living environment. Although the measurement for adolescents already existed (e.g. Perceived Life Satisfaction Scale; [45]), it was the Huebner scales that caused the rapid increase in the number of well-being research in these age groups and continue to be one of the most popular measurement tools so far.

Studies of subjective well-being dynamics showed that, in contrast with the level of adults' subjective well-being that remains constant on the average point of 75 on a 100-point, according to Cummins research in Western cultures [46, 47], for children and adolescents there is a nonlinear distribution of the level of perception of their well-being over time. Research indicates that with the start of adolescence, the level of subjective well-being begins to decline, and this decline was recorded for samples from different countries [48–51]. Furthermore, it was confirmed by data from an international study involving 15 countries [52, 53]. The results of cross-sectional studies are also supported by longitudinal data indicating a decline in well-being during the transition to adolescence [49, 54, 55]. Researchers attribute this decrease in the level of subjective well-being to developmental characteristics in adolescence, namely physiological, psychological, and social changes that occur at this age [50].

2.2 Subjective well-being for different gender

On the other hand, data are more controversial about differences in subjective well-being between boys and girls. Some studies showed a higher level of subjective well-being for boys [50, 56], and some showed a higher level of subjective well-being for girls [55–57]. In a study by Goldbeck and colleagues, girls showed a lower level of overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with their health, than boys [50]. Interestingly enough, gender differences begin to appear after the level of satisfaction begins to decline, and the decline for girls is more pronounced [54, 58]. In contrast, a longitudinal study in Algeria showed differences in favor of girls on scales of school satisfaction. In the same study, gender differences in the level of satisfaction with friends are not observed [57], despite the fact that they were recorded at the age of 8, when girls showed a higher level of satisfaction with their relationships with peers than boys [58]. Such inconsistent results might be caused by different environmental conditions that favor either boys or girls, or be related to study design, for example, the age of the children included in the sample, as some studies indicated a sharp decrease in the level of subjective well-being for girls particularly in adolescence while for boys the rate of decline in well-being is slower [54, 58].

Why is it necessary to talk about age dynamics and possible gender differences when we talk about measuring subjective well-being in children and adolescents? There are two main reasons for this.

First, measurement instrument developers and users need to be sure that the instrument is able to detect real differences and does not contain items or sentences that children of different sexes or ages, but with the same level of well-being, will interpret differently. To prove this, the differential item functioning test (DIF) should be made on the stage of psychometric analysis. Only after the DIF test the comparison study should be conducted [59]. For example, do the statements “I perform well at school” or “My friends treat me well” have the same meaning for primary and secondary school students? It can be assumed that performing well at school and

relationships with friends will have a different manifestation for them and will appear in different sets of behavior.

Additionally, the potential presence of differences in interpretation of questionnaire items raises the question about inclusion of new items that covers specific context for each age group in cases where we aimed to measure not global satisfaction but satisfaction in a specific domain.

Thus, before we run a comparative study, the comparability of the construct as well as the analysis of individual items of the measurement instrument should be made in order to justify its validity in different cultural, age, and other groups of respondents (ref to adaptation requirements). This is one of the necessary requirements for the measurement instrument development, but rarely the detailed items' analysis is provided in publications about development or adaptation of the instrument and its psychometric analysis.

3. Review of the existing instruments to measure subjective well-being

The instruments for measuring subjective well-being can roughly be divided into three categories: single-item measures, scales, and complex instruments. Examples of the most commonly used scales are shown in **Table 1**. Let's consider each category of the instruments from the point of view of their applicability for different purposes.

Single-item measures for measuring subjective well-being are often used in large monitoring studies where there is a need to evaluate a construct, but no opportunity to add the entire scales due to time and format constraints or the large number of different areas of life domains. Usually, these are monitoring studies aimed to assess other constructs than subjective well-being. For example, the PISA study, which focuses on 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and scientific knowledge, and skills to meet real-life challenges, now includes a measure of subjective well-being [68]. In 2015, students were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with life on a scale from 1 to 10. Already in the next 2018 PISA monitoring, an independent separate questionnaire was assigned to the topic of well-being, which was presented after the main survey by countries' request. The questionnaire included information not only about satisfaction with various aspects of life, but also an assessment of one's health, relationships with friends, etc.

Regarding the use of single-item measures, we would like to discuss a few points. On the one hand, the inclusion of just one question takes up very little space in the questionnaire and allows to cover more thematic blocks in one test. On the other hand, by using just several single-item measures, we receive less information about the construct of our interest. It may not be critical in studies where well-being is only one construct out of many and is used rather as a control variable, but it is fundamentally important if well-being is the focus of attention. When respondents answer only one question, we get a small variation in data. A small variation does not allow us to accurately differentiate respondents in terms of their subjective well-being, reduces the possibilities for using some statistical methods, and covers only a very narrow area of the studying construct, thereby reducing the validity of our measurement. One way to solve this problem is by increasing the rating scale to 10 response categories. But in this case, another problem emerges—it is rather difficult for respondents, and especially for children and young adolescents, to evaluate their behavior, feelings, relationships on such a large scale, since there is no clear understanding of what each of the points

Measurement instrument	Scales: N of items	Target audience	Author(s)
Life Satisfaction Scale	Life satisfaction scale: 5 items Total: 5 items	Adults	[43, 60]
Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)	Positive affect: 10 Negative affect: 10 Total: 20 items	Adults	[61]
Child version of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-C)	Positive affect: 12 Negative affect: 15 Total: 27 items	Children*	[62]
Student's Life Satisfaction Scale	Student life satisfaction scale: 9 Total: 9 items	Children*	[44]
Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS)	Satisfaction with family: 7 Satisfaction with friends: 9 Satisfaction with school: 8 Satisfaction with living environment: 9 Satisfaction with self: 7 Total: 40 items	Children*	[15, 63]
Brief Multidimensional Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS)	One item per domain: 6 items Total: 6 items	Children*	[64]
Brief Adolescents' Subjective Well-Being in School Scale (BASWBSS)	School satisfaction (different school domains): 8 Affect toward school: 2 Total: 10 items <i>General BASWBSS score is available</i>	Children*	[65]
Personal Well-Being Index—School Children (PWI-SC)	Personal Well-Being: 7 Total: 7 items	Children*	[66]
Survey of subjective well-being in school (SSWBS)	Satisfaction with school: 8 Affect toward school: 3 Collaboration with classmates: 6 Hostility: 6 Subjective physical well-being: 2 <i>General score of Subjective well-being in school is available</i>	Children*	[67]

*Age 8 and older.

Table 1.
Different measures of subjective well-being.

means, which leads to different interpretations. In addition, there are doubts that the respondents distinguish each score and the distance between them, for example, is the subjective difference between points 6 and 7 the same as between 8 and 9.

It is also worth noting that individual questions for assessing subjective well-being are also common in studies of adults and higher education students. McDowell, in his review of subjective well-being assessment instrument for adults [69], lists four types of such questions:

- single-item measures with an instruction such as “Please indicate how you feel now – taking into account what has happened in the last year and what you expect in the near future How do you feel about _____? (your health, quality of life, etc.)”;

- graphic questions, where the respondent has to choose a picture with an emotional facial expression (“Face scale”) that most accurately reflects his/her level of well-being;
- another option for a graphical format is “Ladder scale” where the respondent should put a mark on a visual scale, where the top rung means “Best I could expect to have” and the bottom one is “Worst I could expect to have”;
- Summary self-rating question, such as “In general, would you say your health today is: excellent? very good? good? fair? poor?”.

McDowell notes that such questions are very attractive for large-scale assessments because they allow compactly measure of such a broad construct and also show a good level of validity, measured as correlation with longer scales of subjective well-being [69].

Another type of instrument that is most commonly used to measure subjective well-being is *self-report scales*. In terms of the time spent on developing such scales, data collection, and the accuracy of the information in the output, this is one of the most accessible and fastest measurement methods, which ensures its popularity in psychological research. Generally, rating or Likert scales are used as response categories for such scales [70]. These are the ordered elements that characterize the degree of agreement, correspondence, frequency, etc., among which the respondent must choose the one that characterizes his or her own assessment of a particular statement or question [71]. For example, the questionnaire may ask the respondent to evaluate a statement on a five-point Likert scale, where 1—completely disagree, and 5—completely agree. However, this method of evaluation also has a number of limitations: response styles (extreme style, tendency to agree), the assumption of the same interpretation of different response categories (it is assumed that the step between the options “strongly disagree” and “disagree” is understood by all respondents in the same way), social desirability of answers, and others.

Multidimensional scales. In education, an integrated approach to assess the well-being of students is becoming increasingly relevant. For example, the OECD expanded the framework of well-being and proposed to consider well-being in educational context as a multidimensional construct that includes five domains: cognitive well-being, psychological well-being (includes life satisfaction), physical well-being, social well-being, material well-being [72]. This approach allows us to analyze the well-being of students from different angles and gives a more detailed feedback later, which is undoubtedly very important in education.

An example of such an integrated approach is the Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) by Huebner [15], which is widely used in research. The MSLSS assesses student satisfaction across different domains: family, friends, school, living conditions, and self. Thus, MSLSS allows you to get a differentiated assessment, which means that you can characterize life satisfaction in more detail.

However, the multidimensional approach does not always mean that the questionnaire measures subjective well-being. Often this approach is used in order to measure additional characteristics related but separate from subjective well-being of the child. This is exactly what The Well-Being Questionnaire in PISA 2018 [72] looks like, where out of a large number of measured variables, only two scales are directly about well-being—Eudaemonia: meaning in life and subjective well-being; Positive affect.

Another example of this comprehensive approach is the KIDSCREEN project’ questionnaires [73]. As part of this project, a multidimensional measurement

instrument was created aimed at assessing the health-related quality of life in children and adolescents aged 8–18. Well-being was considered here from different angles as a part of general health covering physical, emotional, mental, social, and behavioral components of well-being.

The main reason that determines whether to include only scales assessing subjective well-being or also some additional factors in the multidimensional questionnaire is the purpose for which this questionnaire is created. The choice of the scales themselves is also purpose driven. For example, in the “Children’s worlds project,” subjective well-being was assessed by the most commonly used instruments for assessing subjective well-being in children and adolescents [52], for example, Satisfaction With Life Scale [43], Personal Well-Being Index [66], Brief Multidimensional Student’s Life Satisfaction Scale [64]. This choice of instruments was determined by the purpose of the study, namely the comparison of the results both with previous studies and between measurements on different scales. This is why it should have been easy-to-adapt scales or the scales that had already been used in the countries participating in the study.

Another feature of such multidimensional questionnaires is that they hardly ever allow us to talk about the calculation of the overall indices of subjective well-being, based on its assessment in different contexts. This is partly due to the fact that it is not always theoretically justified and does not always add practical value, and partly because the authors do not always set themselves such a goal. Also it might be methodologically hard to build such a multidimensional model that will fit the data well enough.

The Survey of subjective well-being in school (SSWBS) [67] provides an overall measure of subjective well-being in school. The authors of the instrument initially aimed to assess the subjective well-being of students, taking into account the school context. According to the proposed theoretical model, the instrument evaluates five components: satisfaction with school, affect toward school, cooperation and hostility with classmates, and subjective physical well-being. The SSWBS includes preexisting scales that have been modified to fit the cultural and age context. However, even with a well-founded theoretical model, it is necessary to empirically substantiate the possibility of creating the general score of well-being in school; otherwise, we can only talk about the evaluation of separate components of the model. The study showed that the questionnaire allows us to calculate both individual scores on scales and the overall index of subjective well-being at school. Being able to choose how to present results can be very useful. For example, if we provide survey results to a school, we will be able to measure subjective well-being from different sides, which is more informative than the overall score. But for presenting the results of monitoring studies for policy-makers, such an integrative indicator or general score may be more convenient.

To measure the well-being of students in universities or colleges, the scales developed for adult respondents are mainly used, without a separate focus on the educational process. These scales include the Public Health Surveillance Well-Being Scale (PHS-WS) [38], developed for the adult population, but also used for student research [74]. The PHS-WS assesses the subjective level of physical, social, and mental well-being. Another example is The Perceived Well-Being Scale [75]. It was originally developed for the elderly people and allowed a short (36 Likert-type items) assessment of a person’s physical and psychological well-being. This scale is also successfully used by researchers to assess the well-being of university students without any adaptation [74]. In higher education studies within the hedonistic approach, Satisfaction with Life Scale [43] is used, as well as The Positive and Negative Affectivity Schedule – PANAS [61].

It is important to note that the questionnaires used to assess student well-being in universities and colleges are not modified to fit the educational context. Students are surveyed with the same instruments as any other adult cohort, although the inclusion of the specific nature of the learning situation at the university or college would most likely increase the validity of the results of such studies. However, scales for assessing specifically student well-being in higher education are still waiting to be created and tested.

4. Feedback about results of subjective well-being assessment

Next and a very important part of any assessment is the feedback on the results of the study. In education, any research, whether it is an international comparative study, a country study, or a study at school or class level, always has its own recipient of the results, and usually several stakeholders can be the recipient of feedback at once. Moreover, the results are used to make decisions at various levels. For example, the results of international comparative studies are usually received by policymakers of different levels and used to make decisions in the field of educational policy, but hardly ever are the results of these studies addressed to the teacher and even more so to the students themselves. At the same time, there are monitoring surveys that could provide the results available for the students themselves, their parents, teachers, and school administration. To whom the feedback will be presented is largely determined by the purpose of the study.

When it is clear who is the recipient of the results, the next question arises—how to make the feedback understandable, user-friendly, and useful. Often, more research is needed to develop such feedback, especially if it is aimed at students, parents, or teachers. If the way in which feedback is given is not clear (enough), the “best” case scenario will reflect the recipient simply ignoring the results. However, it might also be possible that the incorrect understanding of the results may be distorted and lead to erroneous interpretation and use.

In our own experience when developing feedback to primary school teachers on the results of subjective well-being monitoring in their classrooms, we also faced a dilemma. On the one hand, the monitoring design made it possible to provide feedback both at class level and at the level of individual student. Feedback was planned on various aspects of the student’s well-being at school and was accompanied by an interpretation of the results at each level of well-being (low, medium, high); hence, it was quite detailed. Special webinars were held with teachers to explain the work with the report on the monitoring results, before the feedback was sent to them. On the other hand, since we, as researchers, did not have any mechanisms to control its correct use after the feedback was provided, we decided not to provide individual feedback at the level of each student. We presented the results as the share of children in the class for each level of subjective well-being, thereby, of course, reducing the amount of useful information. Therefore, the risks of potential harm have been minimized. Later, when one of the goals of monitoring was to provide one overall measure of subjective well-being in school, we gave feedback to teachers on a per-child basis. In this case, the interpretation of the result was more general and the risk of its misuse was minimal.

When presenting a report on the results and adjusting it to the needs and preparation level of the addressee, we propose to use the following structure of the report.

- First, define the construct(s) being measured.
- Then provide the information about the sample. Depending on the addressee it might be more or less informative, for example, it is strange to describe the sample in the teachers' report about his or her class (other than the number of children who participated in the study), but in reports for managers and policy-makers, this could be an important piece of information.
- Next, present the results. It is always useful if reference criteria are provided: something you can compare the results with. In international comparative studies, this is usually the country's average. But depending on the study and the availability of data, this can be a comparison with other schools in the region or city, and even a comparison with other classes in the school. In comparative studies of well-being, it is not usually used, but it is possible to compare an individual result with the results of representatives from the population.
- The last part of the results report is the interpretation. Its volume and content are determined by the purpose of the study and the addressee of the feedback.

5. Guidelines for subjective well-being measurement

In every study, a decision needs to be made on which measurement instrument will be used to measure subjective well-being. Given the increased interest in the study of subjective well-being in education, most likely the number of different instruments and questionnaires for well-being measurement will only increase in the near future. Further on we offer some steps that will help you to choose the most appropriate measurement instrument for your study.

Note that planning a study is a complicated task. If you feel either uncertain or unconfident, we would like to advise you to invite relevant experts to participate in the study to develop the study design, make psychometric analysis, and discuss the practical implementation.

Step 1. Purpose of the study and sample. At this step, it is important to clearly define the purpose of the study and the target sample. For example, the aim of the study might be to monitor the subjective well-being of primary students at school N in order to select classes for intervention programs. Already at this stage, we have to decide how detailed the information about the measured construct that we want to collect should be. Do we need a general index of subjective well-being? How many domains do we want to cover? Is the context important?

Step 2. The definition of the measured construct is a very important step, since it determines what we actually are about to measure. The result will be obtained in relation to this definition. One can focus only on satisfaction and affect, or one can include the measurement of purpose in life, as well as collect information about related constructs, for example, bullying.

Step 3. Choice of the measurement instrument. Based on the previous two steps, we choose the type of the instrument: single-item measures, scales, or multidimensional scales. At this stage, we analyze the quality of the available instruments in terms of its application to our purpose and target sample, its reliability and validity. Since most subjective well-being scales are used quite extensively, a large body of

evidence has been accumulated about their reliability and validity (e.g., see review [76]). However, if you were to adapt the scale from another culture, this information may not be sufficient and a follow-up psychometric study will be necessary for the new adapted version. Also, papers about instrument's quality hardly ever provide the information on DIF, which can be especially important when using the same instrument to compare children from different age cohorts or gender. In this case an additional DIF study is needed.

Step 4. Prepare the instrument for data collection. At this stage, informed consent should be collected in the form that is relevant to the laws of your country. Then the questionnaire should be prepared for the administration (including instructions and other procedures). Recently, the majority of such a study is administered in computer form. In this case the IT platform should be tested and the requirements of the participants' devices should be made and checked.

When preparing the questionnaire, it is important to pay attention to several points. Firstly, how to familiarize your target audience with the chosen testing format? The less prepared the audience, the more attention should be paid to examples in instruction and trial tasks. Secondly, it is necessary to make sure that all instructions are clear and that the survey is intuitive and the form of its presentation should be practical. For example, in computer testing, it is desirable to avoid the need to scroll the page, especially for younger children, since this a) involves an additional skill, b) the continuation of the page may simply not be noticed. Also, if you use a scale, it's a good idea to present it in a table, rather than having each statement individually evaluated, unless you have a special reason to do so. Presenting the scale as a table reduces the cognitive load compared with scoring each statement on the scale individually.

At this stage, some cognitive interviews might be conducted to ensure the clarity of the instructions, test form, and the sentences in the questionnaire itself.

Step 5. Data collection. At this step, it is important to ensure a standardized data collection procedure for the subsequent correct interpretation of the results. The personal information should be treated in a safe and legal (for your country) way.

Step 6. Data analysis. After data have been collected, we can start to analyze them in order to test research hypotheses. At the stage of data analysis, it is important to pay attention to the type of data that you have and use only appropriate statistical methods depending on the data type. In comparative studies, it is important to check the equivalence of construct, method, and items.

Step 7. Interpretation of results and feedback. Above, in section 4, we already described that this is one of the most delicate steps during the study. Treat the results with care. Sometimes the consultation of a practicing psychologist might be needed.

Those are general descriptions of the steps that should be taken to conduct a study and collect data about well-being for any age group and in any context. If you are interested in large-scale assessment for the adult population, you might also check the guidelines provided by OECD [77].

6. Conclusion

In modern education, the subjective well-being of students has become an important goal and is included in assessments in research of all kinds, from studies of relatively small groups of students in the classroom to international comparative studies. The choice of an assessment instrument is one of the significant stages of the

study, which ensures the validity of the interpretation of the results. In our review, we distinguish three groups of instruments for measuring subjective well-being: single-item measures, scales, and multidimensional scales. The choice of the instrument for a particular study will be determined by its purpose, the amount and detail of information that is planned to be collected, as well as data on the validity and reliability of the instrument. An important part of the study of well-being in education is the preparation of feedback on the results of the study.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Thanks

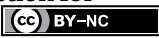
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Positive Psychology and Healthy Lifestyles for Health and Happiness

Liana Lianov

Abstract

Positive psychology in combination with a healthy lifestyle has the potential to enhance health and well-being at a level beyond that achieved by healthy lifestyle habits alone—a state of health termed positive health by Martin Seligman, the founder of the positive psychology field. This chapter covers how positive psychology interventions and positive emotions with healthy physical habits play a vital role in health. The mechanism is twofold: 1. positive emotions as powerful drivers of behavior change and 2. direct physiologic benefits of positive emotions. Health professionals need to consider how to integrate this science and practice of positive psychology into their patient assessments and recommendations. An overview will be provided about the scientific studies that show the reinforcing, reciprocal relationship between positive psychology activities and physical healthy lifestyles. Strategies to apply in clinical practices outside of behavioral health and research recommendations are reviewed. Future research is needed to transform these research-informed approaches into evidence-based practice and address a major research gap on how different cultures and populations form positive psychology interventions.

Keywords: positive psychology, positive health, health care, total well-being, lifestyle medicine, positive psychology interventions

1. Introduction

Positive psychology is the scientific study of human flourishing and the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities, and organizations to thrive and stated more broadly. The field studies conditions and processes contribute to optimal functioning [1]. Positive psychology-based interventions impact physical health as well as mental and emotional health, and hence, they align with and advance the objectives of health and medical practitioners, who seek to impact health and quality of life.

The relevance and importance of positive psychology approaches to health care are especially highlighted for practitioners of lifestyle medicine, which uses lifestyle interventions to, not only prevent diseases, but also treat chronic diseases and, in some cases, reverse these conditions. By combining healthy lifestyle and positive psychology in the health care, we can promote positive health—a state of health over and above what can be achieved when we address solely traditional risk factors, such as eating patterns, physical activity, and sleep [2]. In this chapter, we will review how

positive psychology approaches and interventions impact health and how they can be incorporated in health care for achieving positive health. Although consensus on terminology is not yet well-established, we'll refer to positive health, flourishing and thriving interchangeably in this chapter as a state of total well-being, including physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health that allows an individual to remain in a healthy state even during traumatic times. This construct is more inclusive than the term happiness, and it highlights the reinforcing, reciprocal nature of positive emotions, healthy lifestyles, and physical health. By contrast, well-being is a broad term used variably in the literature to describe positive physical and emotional states.

2. The essential link between healthy lifestyles and positive psychology

Achieving positive health relies on both physical health habits and positive mindsets and activities. Health practitioners can prescribe these positive psychology interventions along with traditional healthy habits, including a predominantly plant-based diet, physical activity, restorative sleep avoidance of risky substances, and managing stress.

Positive activities represent a pillar of a total healthy lifestyle prescription and also lead to positive emotions, the key driver for healthy behavior changes. Hence, positive psychology has an essential role in helping individuals achieve and sustain healthy behaviors. Moreover, positive psychology-based activities have direct physiologic benefits, such as boosts in the parasympathetic nervous system.

The reinforcing nature between healthy lifestyles and positive emotions produces a powerful effect. As positive emotions are experienced in association with the health behaviors, individuals are more likely to repeat the healthy behaviors in a nonconscious manner. The more we do healthy behaviors, the more likely we are to achieve positive health. A number of studies are reviewed here showing the link between key healthy lifestyle behaviors and boosts in mood, treatment depression, and increased happiness.

Many questions remain about how to apply positive psychology interventions for which the evidence has been built within behavioral health settings into primary care and medical specialty health care settings. The evidence base for these traditional healthcare settings is being built by a few leading researchers, including Judith Moskowitz at Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois. Her team is looking at the feasibility and impact in settings, such as oncology clinics. Other researchers and practitioners are asking how can health practitioners prescribe these interventions for different populations of patients? What is the appropriate “dosing” and timing of these prescriptions? In the meantime, the healthcare field can be “research-informed” and benefit by acknowledging the role of a positive activities as part of a healthy lifestyle and starting discussions with patients about this element of health that encompasses total well-being and positive health and encouraging patients to explore what positive activities work for them, giving them a sense of vitality.

In addition to promoting quality of life, positive health, and increasing longevity among patients, these activities can boost the well-being of health practitioners. By personally practicing a total healthy lifestyle with positive psychology activities, practitioners can achieve personal well-being and produce a better work-life balance, especially in the context of a workplace environment that prioritizes a culture of well-being, practitioners can help prevent burnout, serve as effective role models for their patients, and develop effective and satisfying medical practices.

3. Positive psychology and healthy lifestyles: what the science shows

Research exploring the impact of healthy lifestyle practices on mental and emotional well-being and vice versa is growing. We'll cite a few examples. Research suggests that healthy nutrition can impact mood. An association between depressive symptoms and poor nutrition has been found in several studies, with the mediating role of gut microbiota posited as one mechanism of action. In a study by Jacka and colleagues [3], moderately to severely depressed individuals were randomly assigned to two groups—those who ate a Mediterranean style eating pattern with social support and those who received social support only. A depression remission rate of 32% occurred among the participants in the dietary and social support intervention group as compared with only 8% of the participants who received the social support only.

The research team of Parletta [4] observed reductions in depression when study participants adhered to the Mediterranean style eating pattern and consumed a variety of nuts and vegetables. These studies suggest that diets high in plants are essential in treating depression and decreasing negative affect. Additional studies show that predominantly plant-based diet can increase positive affect [5–8].

A large epidemiologic study of over 80,000 individuals in the United Kingdom demonstrated a dose-response relationship between consuming fruits and vegetables and happiness even after controlling for numerous confounding factors known to influence emotional well-being [7]. In a longitudinal study, participants who consumed eight or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day had the highest levels of subjective well-being [9]. Although more research is needed, these kinds of studies provide initial evidence that nutritional interventions should be considered essential when looking at achieving not only physical health, but also mental and emotional health.

Regular physical activity has also long been strongly associated with better mood and preventing and treating depression [10–13]. In fact, exercise is comparable to antidepressant medications for relieving depression [14]. Some of the mechanisms by which physical activity can be mood enhancing include boost in endorphins and other neurotransmitters, regulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, increased neurogenesis psychological distraction, and improved self-efficacy [15–17]. Even a walk as short as 10–15 min has been shown to be sufficient to boost positive effect [18].

Higher intensity aerobic exercise and resistance exercise may confer additional mood enhancing benefits [19, 20]. More research is needed to better understand the influence of different forms of exercise and different dosing and durations on mental health and the achievement of total well-being or positive health.

Sleep is another pillar of a total healthy lifestyle with 7–9 h of high-quality sleep per night recommended [21]. Lack of sleep has been shown to make individuals be more sensitive to negativity [22]. Sleep-deprived individuals were more than twice as likely to remember words with negative connotations in a memory task. Chronic insomnia can be a predictor of depression in subsequent years [23, 24] showed that sleep deprivation is also associated with anxiety disorders. Hence, getting adequate sleep is an important intervention for addressing mood disorders.

The reinforcing reciprocal link between these healthy activities and mood has been demonstrated by additional studies that show healthy lifestyles boost mood and positive emotions are associated with greater achievement and adherence to healthy activities. Positive effect drives positive lifestyle choices [25, 26].

Positive emotions can be fostered through a variety of positive psychology interventions, such as savoring, expressing gratitude supporting others, nurturing a sense of meaning and purpose. Moreover, positive emotions experienced during healthy activities prompt engagement in healthy eating and physical activity [26] and have been associated with increased utilization of preventive services [27]. Positive emotions can even forecast behavioral engagement and healthy lifestyle practices 15 months later [28, 29].

The upward spiral theory describes this reinforcing phenomenon through which pleasant intrinsic and natural emotions increase motivation and positive health behaviors by activating thought action repertoires that lead to exploring new things, building on an individual's physical, psychological, and social resources [26, 30, 31]. For example, when an individual experiences positive emotions by engaging in physical activities, he is driven to go back and re-engage in those activities over and over again. This upward, reinforcing nature is enhanced by associated benefits, called vantage resources. A happier person, for example, may be able to make more friends and expand social connections. These social supports further drive healthy, positive behaviors that increase health and happiness. Hence, an upward, outward spiral of health and happiness occurs.

Positive psychology-based activities, when prescribed in healthcare and counseling settings, have been used for managing stress and lessen negative emotions. Advancing the integration of positive psychology into health care is also essential for boosting positive emotions to enhance health and well-being. Proposed mechanisms of action for positive affect and happiness leading to improved health and longevity include improved cardiovascular health, better endocrine regulation, lower inflammation, bolstered immune system, and increased telomere length [32].

Medical practitioners can prescribe activities such as hobbies that produce a sense of flow, mindfulness practices, meaningful activities such as volunteering acts of kindness and social connection.

Although further research is needed about how prescribing these kinds of activities in a healthcare setting can impact ultimate outcomes, integration of a few these practices into medical practice warrants attention.

4. Key positive psychology interventions

One framework posited by the founder of the field of positive psychology Martin Seligman is the PERMA framework—P for positive emotions, E for engagement, R for relationships, M for meaning, and A for accomplishment [33]. These five elements in the PERMA model summarize different kinds of positive psychology-based activities that can be prescribed for achieving well-being and happiness. In addition, mindfulness, which is commonly defined as paying attention to present moment experience with an attitude of acceptance or nonjudgement [34], can also be prescribed for patients who are interested.

Mindfulness practice of self-regulation, attention to the immediate experience, and an orientation of nonjudgmental openness [35] can have a number of positive health effects. The mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program developed by Jon Kabat Zin [36] has been widely studied, particularly in reducing stress resulting from chronic pain. Mindfulness is an umbrella term that refers to a variety of practices that promote control one's attention and breath, including various meditation practices.

In addition to triggering beneficial physiologic effects, such as lowering blood pressure, mindfulness practices have been associated with improvements in a variety of mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression, managing physical pain, supporting substance use recovery, reducing stress in general, and promoting well-being [37–39].

When recommending mindfulness, as with any positive psychology-based interventions, practitioners need to keep in mind the patient's preferences, culture, and spiritual and religious beliefs. In some cases, negative outcomes have been reported, such as worsening depression, especially among people with a history of substance use or psychiatric illness [40].

4.1 PERMA

P—positive emotions can be triggered through activities such as gratitude practice, acts of kindness, forgiveness, and savoring. These activities not only boost positive emotions, but also positive thoughts, positive behaviors, and need satisfaction [41]. Engaging in such activities serves as a protective factor to reduce the impact of stressors and risk factors, such as rumination and loneliness and allow for adaptive coping.

E—engagement, also termed flow, occurs when one is engaged in a task with a balance of the perceived challenge and the personal skills in conducting that activity. Individuals who achieve this flow state have reported some of the highest levels of happiness [41]. This flow experience is intense involvement in the activity moment-to-moment with the potential to function at once fullest capacity [42, 43]. Examples of being in flow are creating art, playing a musical instrument, working on crafts, gardening, doing physical activity.

R—relationships and social connections represent the element of PERMA with the most robust longitudinal studies showing the link between relationships social connections and health and well-being [44]. Even short moments of connection with strangers can lead to positive interactions, called micro-moments of connectivity, which have been associated with positive health benefits [45]. Social support has been shown to help individuals maintain a healthy body mass index, control their blood sugar, decrease depressive symptoms, mitigate post-traumatic stress disorder, and improve their overall mental wellbeing. The Harvard development study [44], a cohort study of over eight decades, concluded that the single most important factor in physical health, happiness, and longevity is social connections.

M—meaning is the element in the PERMA model with significant health and well-being benefits. Research shows that having a purpose in life has a positive influence on biological, psychological, and behavioral outcomes and has a protective role in heart disease [46]. In fact, those with a higher sense of purpose use preventive healthcare services more regularly and experience fewer nights spent in the hospital [27]. Higher levels of meaning had been associated with decreased likelihood of negative health outcomes and increased positive health outcomes [46].

A—accomplishment is an essential human need. Individuals strive for goals and those who experience feelings of accomplishment by using their skills and realizing their goals feel successful and contribute to their overall sense of well-being [33].

Meaningful self-directed goals that can be feasibly achieved and provide that sense of accomplishment are essential for the overall approach to flourishing and well-being. Health care can facilitate positive psychology interventions by asking questions during the medical encounter about the patient's activities that boost their positive

emotions, their social connections, and their sense of meaning. Practitioners can demonstrate the essential role of positive psychology-based activities on one's health by showing that they are taking these interventions just as seriously as prescribing medications.

5. Positive psychology in health care

During the clinical encounter, the practitioner can start a dialog about positive activities and ask the patients to consider exploring resources and trying different ones to see what best aligns with their interests and situation. Practitioners who would like to fully integrate positive psychology approaches into their practice for facilitating positive health might consider a structured redesign of their practice to include formal positive psychology assessments and prescriptions. A number of validated assessments of positive emotions and life satisfaction, such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Ed Diener [47], can be used. While standard of practice includes routine assessments of depression, anxiety, and stress, the emotional and mental health assessments can be expanded to also assess positive affect.

After an assessment of negative and positive emotions, the practitioner can include in the treatment or health maintenance plan, not only recommendations for a healthy diet, physical activity, sleep, and activities to manage stress, but also positive activities. Primary care and specialty settings may only have the bandwidth to conduct brief discussions of positive well-being activities—although showing that the practitioner takes positive activities as seriously as other healthy lifestyles is essential.

Positive psychology topics for discussion during the clinical encounter can vary widely. A few common ones include harnessing optimism, personal character strengths, practicing gratitude, finding meaningful activities. As time is short in a busy clinical practice, patients can be encouraged to consider doing a few exercises on their own. They can be asked to write down their vision of optimal health and happiness and the steps and activities they could do to achieve that vision. Patients could be prompted to consider their strengths and how they have successfully applied their strengths to achieve goals in the past. Keep a gratitude journal with entries of three good things in their lives once or twice a week could be another exercise. Dedicating some time to identify what is meaning in one's life or remembering recent positive events and writing them down can also enhance positive affect. Providing a handout or webpage number of options, encouraging the patients to choose at least one, and following up at the next visit along with other medical updates could be an easy strategy for integrating these approaches into the patient action plans. Acknowledging that individuals from different cultures, personalities, interests, and past experiences may benefit differently and emphasizing the need to explore various activities can help patient's comfort level for pursuing them [2].

Patients can also be referred to other members of the healthcare team or external behavioral health professionals, health coaches, and spiritual counselors for assessments, discussions, and follow-up. They can be referred to community and digital resources. A number of digital apps designed to help individuals track and boost their positive emotions, their personal strengths, and positive activities. In addition, various mindfulness and stress management classes in the community, hobby groups, volunteer organizations, and senior centers can provide opportunities for PERMA activities.

Health professionals can also bring positive interactions into the examining room, shifting the conversation during those encounters to build positive emotions. These

interactions can be as simple as asking the patients what has gone well in their lives since they were last seen and also ending encounters with a question about what went well during the encounter.

A few examples of questions that can be asked include: What happened in the past week that made you smile. What in your life brings you joy? What's a favorite activity that you have done recently? What's something that you are looking forward to in the coming week? Is there something fun you'd like to do in the near future?

Coaches have been integrating positive psychology techniques into healthy behavior counseling for over two decades, such as combined positive psychology and motivational interviewing practices. Health professionals who are counseling for health behavior change can learn from these practices. Both motivational interviewing and positive psychology coaching have their roots in person-centered theory. Integrating positive psychology into coaching harnesses the upward spiral theory we introduced earlier. Positive visioning is another method to help engage patients to look at a positive future when they make their changes, during that positive visioning, they are already boosting their positive emotions.

Positive interactions with patients create positivity resonance for both the patient and for the health practitioner. The work of Barbara Fredrickson and colleagues [48] shows that positivity resonance leads to physiologic benefits, such as boosts of the parasympathetic nervous system, when a synchrony of positive emotions occurs between individuals or within a group.

Another essential aspect of positive psychology is character strengths. Health practitioners and individuals can identify their individual strengths either informally by making an assessment of family and friends and what they notice as the individual's strengths or more formally, through a validated questionnaire at viacharacter.org. Making a concerted effort to identify one's strengths and use them on a regular basis can boost one's well-being. Health practitioners can encourage patients to identify their character strengths and build them into their action plans for health behavior change and positive health.

A coach or health practitioner can bring these strengths out by asking questions such as: Tell me about your past achievements. How did you make it happen? Think back over the previous week or month; when were you at your best? Among your family or friends what are you most famous for?

6. Positive psychology for practitioner well-being

Health practitioners can personally and professionally use the PERMA model for well-being by intentionally having experiences designed to elicit positive feelings and engagement—becoming immersed in health behavior activities and worthwhile pursuits to the point where one has that sense of flow. They can especially be mindful of developing strong connections by doing healthy activities together, such as healthy cooking with family and friends and walking together in groups, increasing positivity resonance and work-life balance. They can find personal meaning in pursuing healthy behaviors to build their own vitality to serve as role models for patients, teach students, and boost their capacity to achieve meaningful life goals. Lastly, setting health behavior goals and achieving them through small steps to ensure success can lead to a sense of accomplishment, which boosts a sense of well-being.

Health professionals can apply positive psychology techniques both at home and at work. Opportunities throughout the workday arise for contributing to a culture of

well-being in the healthcare workplace. For example, the health team can maintain a gratitude jar—a positive and invigorating practice. Gratitude notes from coworkers are collected throughout the week, and at the end of the week, the team reads through them. Such practices, not only bonds the team, but also can boost positive emotions for greater work engagement.

Health professionals can intentionally look for opportunities throughout the workday to get into flow, while doing medical procedures, for example, to complement the flow they find outside of work when involved with hobbies. Seeking positive interactions with coworkers and patients throughout the day is also essential, adding to the well-being benefits—positivity resonance—of relationships with family and friends.

In addition, being mindful of what they find meaningful at work and how their work aligns with their values further can contribute as a well-being promoter. However, health professionals need to avoid overemphasizing work as their main source of meaning, which may lead to overwork and burnout. Hence, finding meaning outside of the work brings greater work-life balance. Setting short-term goals throughout the workday and achieving them, as well as advancing toward exciting professional long-term goals can help prevent burnout. Taking a class to learn a new professional skill or taking skills-based examinations to advance one's career brings that healthy sense of accomplishment when achieving one's goals. Such positive activities can have short and long-term positive effects on well-being and happiness [49–51]. Practicing core healthy lifestyle modifications with positive activities is key to medical practitioners' well-being, enable modeling of positive health for patients, coworkers, and students.

7. Future research

Much of the research cited here comes from positive psychology and mental health behavioral health settings. Translational research in healthcare settings can test the feasibility and impact on patients' health outcomes and provide satisfaction of positive psychology approaches conducted in these settings. Cross-discipline research with positive psychology researchers and medical practitioners will advance the necessary translational research.

Medical practitioners can partner with research societies and local universities, attend conferences to learn more about research gaps, and consult published meta-analyses about the current scope of positive psychology research and evidence to date. Practitioners can contribute by helping to conduct small tests of feasibility for making changes in their practices that harness positive psychology. Testing various practice redesign frameworks that support positive psychology interventions serves an essential step before committing to larger-scale translational research that study health outcomes. While the evidence base is being built for positive psychology integration into healthcare practice, practitioners can apply the techniques summarized in this chapter and build leading-edge research-informed practices that promote positive health.

Examples of translational research questions that need to be addressed include: What specific positive psychology interventions can influence which mental and physical health conditions? What positive psychology interventions work best for mental and physical health outcomes in different populations? What is the feasibility and acceptability of clinical positive psychology to patients and other health professionals in non-mental health/behavioral health settings? Do these positive psychology

strategies impact outcomes in real-world healthcare settings improve quality of life and boost health behaviors? Can these positive psychology strategies be implemented into medical practice? In meaningful effective and efficient ways?

8. Resources

Credible positive psychology resources are available on the websites of academic institutions with positive psychology centers, such as the University of Pennsylvania. Useful digital apps include those that leverage positive psychology for stress management, track current life stressors, measure progress toward happiness, and provide how-to audio and guides. Health coaches, articles, weekly assignments grounded in kind of behavioral techniques, identification of character and personality strengths, and tracking of positive habits and social interactions are just a few of the ever-expanding offerings. A key criterion for choosing resources is verifying the apps and websites are offered by credible, science-based teams. Check out the “about” section to learn the background of the teams.

Writings by key thought leaders in the field of positive psychology provide another useful resource to advance one’s knowledge, skills, and clinical practice for positive health. Look for the extensive work on flow by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Angela Duckworth leads the thinking and research on personality traits and success. Sonia Lyubomirsky focuses her research on happiness practices, including gratitude practice. Ed Diener is one of the most cited positive psychology researchers in well-being and flourishing assessments. Barbara Fredrickson has spearheaded the work on positive emotions, positivity resonance, the broaden and build theory, and the upward spiral theory—theories that frame how positive emotions broaden thinking and influence behavior change. Martin Seligman, considered the founder of positive psychology, has written widely on flourishing and PERMA and coined the term positive health, as we have defined in this chapter.

Academic and professional organizations serve as essential resources for building research, services, and education in positive psychology and health. A few of these institutions include the University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Center, the Stanford University Center for Altruism Research and Education, the Yale University’s Center for Emotional Intelligence, the Benson Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine, Stanford University’s Center for Compassion Cultivation Training, and the University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Center and Master’s in Applied Positive Psychology. The extensive work at the Harvard Center for Health and Happiness conducts cutting-edge research on a variety of topics in positive psychology and health and well-being.

Healthcare programs that integrate positive psychology into health promotion and treatment lead the transformation of care to emphasize this well-being element. Examples are the Veterans Health administration’s Whole Health for Life program, Stanford University’s WELL for Life program, Kaiser Permanente Medical group’s Thrive campaign program, and the Massachusetts General Hospital’s cardiac psychiatry program that offer positive psychology interventions for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and metabolic syndrome.

Scientific publications serve as the core resource for the growing evidence base behind positive psychology and happiness research and health and well-being. Key journals in this subject area include the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *Journal of Positive Psychology and Wellbeing*, and the *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

Community-based programs, such as Australia's Act-Belong-Commit, which promotes individual and community action and the Action for Happiness movement support and bring people together to engage in activities for happiness and well-being. These programs, along with educational organizations, such as the Global Positive Health Institute, facilitate the adoption and practical application of the expanding scientific and application resources.

9. Conclusion

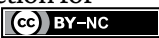
The relatively new field of positive psychology offers powerful science and tools essential for promoting total well-being and positive health. The healthcare field is starting to harness the science of positive health, as we test and develop feasible and impactful approaches that can be integrated into healthcare systems informed by studies from behavioral health. Much more research is needed to translate this science into the evidence base for traditional healthcare settings. In the meantime, research-informed and simple lessons and tools can be applied for promoting both practitioner and patient well-being. As the field of positive psychology and health, perhaps to be called "positive health" as a standard term, grows in scientific research, practical implementation, training, and dissemination, we have much to gain for achieving and sustaining the highest levels of well-being in the public domain, as well as in health care.

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Section 3

Social Perspective

The Pursuit of Happiness: Cultural and Psychological Considerations

Vanda Vitali and John A. Moran

Abstract

A scientist and art historian from Canada and France and a clinical psychologist from the United States, team to examine the notion of pursuit of happiness as one of the major social values in our western society. Building on robust body of social science research practice in cultural fields in different parts of the world and the clinical practice of over thirty years in the United States, the authors explore individual happiness as well as societal happiness and consider implications of pursuit of happiness for the future of individuals and societies in face of the current multiple crisis. Finally, they suggest replacing the value of happiness with a more balanced and sustainable value, such as contentment.

Keywords: pursuit of happiness, individual happiness, societal happiness, positive psychology, contentment

1. Introduction

Today in western culture, living human life in the way that makes one happy is considered a necessity and even a right - The Constitution of the United States enshrines as unalienable the right to the “pursuit of Happiness.”

The pursuit of happiness often, perhaps usually, leads to greater and greater desire to have more and more. The pursuit of happiness is our consumer society’s main driver/supporter. The film critic Rex Harrison quipped, “Someone who thinks that money cannot buy happiness doesn’t know where to shop.”

In this article, we examine through literature review and our own practice, first the notion of happiness through psychology lens as it pertains to individuals and how it influences the pursuit of happiness. We then look into societal happiness. Finally, we will consider how the pursuit of happiness, as a social value, may need to be reexamined and recalibrated in order for our society to be able to respond more successfully to individual and societal wellbeing.

2. Cultural and psychological considerations of pursuit of happiness

2.1 Pursuing happiness through psychology lens

As a profession, psychology is in the happiness business. Historically, psychology has focused on remediating illness and personal deficits. In 1998, psychology oriented

more directly on happiness following Martin Seligman, Ph.D.'s Presidential address to the American Psychological Association calling for broadening the profession from focusing on the remediation of disease to building adaptive strengths, an approach referred to as positive psychology. A Google search for the term "positive psychology" leads to 700+ million sites, and more than 18,000 publications have elaborated, delineated, and applied positive psychology concepts to a broad range of populations, life situations, and practices. In short, psychologists have been doing a lot of thinking, writing about what happiness is and how one promotes it.

Out of this work emerges positive psychology as an umbrella term which incorporates multiple conceptualizations of happiness. Seligman [1] defined positive psychology as, "the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life." To psychologists, happiness is a life marked by a preponderance of positive emotions [2] derived from positive events and influences in life, including [3]:

- Positive experiences (like happiness, joy, inspiration, and love)
- Positive states and traits (like gratitude, resilience, and compassion)
- Positive institutions (applying positive principles within entire organizations and institutions)

Although positive psychology is a relatively new area of inquiry, it emerges from long-standing traditions [4] such as:

- Utilitarianism – happiness for the greatest number of people
- Virtue philosophy
- Hedonistic and Eudaimonic philosophies

Multiple models have been proposed for understanding the genesis of happiness. Ryff [5] developed a model for Psychological Well-Being composed of six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and, self-acceptance.

Seligman and his colleagues [6] identified 6 virtues associated with well-being: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.

Each of the virtues is broken down into character strengths:

Wisdom and Knowledge (cognitive strengths)

- Curiosity
- Judgment and Open-mindedness
- Love of learning
- Creativity
- Perspective taking

Courage (emotional strengths)

- Honesty
- Bravery
- Perseverance
- Zest

Humanity (interpersonal strengths)

- Social intelligence
- Kindness
- Love

Justice (civic strengths)

- Fairness
- Teamwork
- Leadership

Temperance (protect against excess)

- Self-regulation
- Modesty and humility
- Prudence
- Forgiveness and mercy

Transcendence (providing meaning and connection)

- Appreciation of beauty
- Hope
- Gratitude
- Religiousness and spirituality
- Humor

In 2011 [4], Seligman proposed the PERMA model of happiness with happiness the product of factors including: pleasure (P), engagement (E), and meaning

(M)—while adding two additional pathways: positive relationships (R) and accomplishments (A).

Concrete interventions strategies have been developed for promoting psychological well-being [7] across a variety of domains. Typically, skills-building exercises are available to increase individual’s ability to: (a) savor the present moment; (b) gratitude toward sources outside of one’s self for life’s positive elements; (c) kindness toward others; (d) empathy to deepen relationships through a sense of understanding; (e) optimism; (f) focusing on one’s and others’ strengths rather than deficits; and (g) meaning-oriented activities by focusing on one’s values, goals, and life as a whole. Additionally, positive mental health draws from the literature in associated domains such as mindfulness, stress management and relaxation, cognitive behavior therapy, emotion focused therapy, dialectical behavior therapy and emotional intelligence to sharpen adaptive skills in the pursuit of goals aligned with positive psychology.

Cultural studies confirm the importance of the indigenous and institutional roots of positive psychology [8] and demonstrate that the values and virtues related to individual’s well-being in western societies differ from those of other cultures. For instance [9], American and Taiwanese preschoolers were asked to choose between an—excited|| smiley face with a wide-open mouth and a—calm one with a smaller, single-line grin. European-American kids said the excited smile was happier, while Taiwanese kids chose the calm one. When they read a story about two kids—one splashed in the swimming pool while the other one floated in an inner tube, one rocketed high and fast on the swings while the other swung slowly—most Taiwanese children identified with the —calm|| character, while most European-American children chose the excited character.

Positive psychology has examined, described, and confirmed the relationship of well-being to a variables including age, socioeconomic conditions, ethnicity, level of education and culture [10–12].

In short, in the last 25 years psychology has made science-based contributions to the study of human happiness. Psychology has gained wide acceptance as a source of valid and useful information, and psychological ideas, concepts, and practices are being utilized by an ever-broadening base of consumers. For example, in 2010 the psychology department at Yale offered a course titled “Psychology and the Good Life”. Within three days of opening registration, more than 1200 students requested the course (approximately one-third of the student body) making it the most popular course ever offered by the university [13].

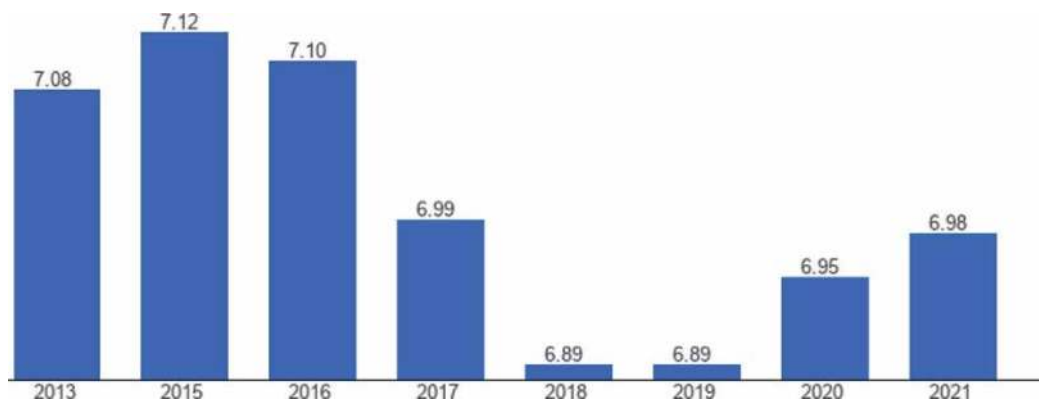


Table 1. *United States happiness index 2013–2020,121 according to the World Happiness [14].*

However, advances in the social sciences about what makes for a happy and satisfying life has not resulted in gains in the general population. Rather, the reverse appears to be the case. Indicators such as The World Happiness Index of the United Nations shows that happiness in the US has declined since 2013 [14]. See **Table 1**.

Indicators such as the rate of teen suicide [15], the divorce rate at over 50%, gun purchases, drug abuse, and escalated political polarization suggest that psychology's emphasis on happiness as a process of engagement, meaning-making, relationship development and skills-utilization in the United States is losing ground to the pursuit of happiness along lines that are iatrogenic and self-destructive.

Most people if asked "what is happiness?" may agree with Seligman that it is to be found in combinations of: (1) pleasure and gratification, (2) embodiment of strengths and virtues, and (3) meaning and purpose [16], but likely, few would argue that the pursuit of happiness is a problem.

2.2 Societal happiness

What is societal happiness?

The Buddhist nation of Bhutan was the first society to determine policy based on the happiness of its citizens, with the king of Bhutan claiming in 1972 that Gross National Happiness (GNH) was a more important measure of progress than Gross National Product (GNP) [17]. Other societies such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand have since developed well-being programs measuring the nation's well-being across several domains similar to Bhutan's approach.

There is a broad agreement that ingredients for a national happiness include: income, freedom, healthy life expectancy, social support, trust and generosity. The World Happiness Report [18] produces annually the global ranking of countries based on these criteria. Scandinavian countries typically are at the top of the global happiness ranking while the war-torn nations such as Afghanistan or Sudan, tend to occupy lowest positions.

The World Happiness Report appears to assume that the pursuit of happiness on an individual level is parallel to national happiness. World Happiness Report rankings rely on measures of self-satisfaction and focuses on what happiness is, not how to achieve it. Parameters such as a good life expectancy, social support, and trust are all important in a society. Factors such as promoting curiosity and learning, which we know from psychology to be central to happiness processes, are not included in the World Index and not assessed as variables. Creating a happier society requires not just promoting what matters, but also promoting the capacities for discovering what matters.

Further, creating a happy society depends on creating the right institutions and processes for discovering the conditions which matter. With the identification and understanding of essential processes and experiences that make people happy, researchers need to pursue studies and society's needs to create institutions that would focus less on happiness and more on what really matters to individuals and society. As a result of interdisciplinary scholarly work in social sciences examining public health and economics over the past decade, societal happiness has increasingly been considered important globally to public policy initiatives. Recently to this list have been added considerations of the social role and responsibilities of corporations in relation to societal happiness [19]. Within positive psychology, utilitarian approaches have examined institutions and business as a factor contributing to positive psychology.

2.3 Pursuing happiness in today's society

We are witnessing the atomization of interests of our society with different groups competing to fulfill their need for happiness. Clashes among competing groups have escalated raising the baseline level of anger and aggression in our western society, particularly in the American society, and resulting in the erosion of trust in social institutions, the same institutions charged with providing support and ultimately happiness to individuals and society. Political scientists [20] foresee a future of endemic regime instability, frequent constitutional crisis, contested elections, periods of dysfunctional democracy followed by periods of authoritarian rule. Have we arrived at a period where anger and aggression are preventing societies in pursuing happiness?

Rampant consumerism across the developed world resulted in destruction of habitats, species and climate. With environmental crisis looming large, struggle for limited resources is becoming a reality. Conflict theory that explains political and economic events in terms of an ongoing struggle over finite resources is resurging. With the environmental crisis and the struggle for more and more limited resources comes more dissatisfaction, anger and ultimately unhappiness.

The question that social scientists and politicians now need to consider is whether the pursuit of happiness that our western society has been idealizing, is healthy and sustainable practice both for individuals and societies. And if it is not, how to modify the happiness paradigm or to replace it.

2.4 Happiness vs. contentment

Research into over 5000 years of human philosophy and 200 years of scientific research into the nature of the mind, reports two different strategies that emerged which humans have been using for thousands of years to find some form of well-being and happiness [21].

The first is the “more” approach, where people try to find more money, more power, more possessions, more validation, and more success from the world outside of them. While there's nothing wrong with pursuing temporary feeling of happiness though more and more acquisitions, the problem with the more strategy is that it is not sustainable. The more strategy costs considerable time, energy, and resources to maintain it. Aiming higher and higher by trying to be happy all the time is also not possible as such states are not enduring psychologically.

The second is the “enough” strategy, where focus is inward on finding happiness that's inside people. The researchers report that in a thousand year of tradition the ancients did not use word happiness when describing wellness. More than ninety percent of the time, they used the word contentment and described it as a state where one feels a complete human being with no desires beyond themselves, the state of wholeness, regardless of what was happening externally. Instead of seeking external sources for happiness, which are outside of our control, contentment offers stability and strength.

Contemporary anthropological research, conducted in the Himalayas of Eastern Bhutan, in uncontacted villages revealed interesting findings regarding contentment. A five year study of identifying universal human emotions across cultures showed that the uncontacted population identified with high accuracy emotions, from joy to shame, from facial and vocal expressions. But there was one emotion that did not behave like all the others. That emotion was contentment and was identified as close

to “the knowledge of enough”, meaning that in the present, everything is perfect as it is, regardless of experiencing the outside. Further anthropological research by the same group indicated that many cultures revered contentment as one of the highest states to cultivate in life.

Contentment comes from our relationship to what is going on around us, rather than our reaction to it. It is a realization that we are whole and complete just as we are, despite the feelings of anger, sadness, joy, frustration, and excitement. It is a long-lasting feeling accompanied by peacefulness, gratitude and satisfaction. While happiness is a temporary feeling, contentment possesses the ability to last indefinitely [22]. If we can feel contentment even when our external environment is out of control, much as the political observers are describing our current world, why our society is not shifting our value system and pursuing contentment rather than happiness. Perhaps, because our materialistic values are so entrenched in the western society. But, with contentment comes purpose and resilience, and also significance and meaning in life.

3. Conclusions

Within the context of prevailing western capitalism, the concept of the pursuit of happiness appears to be a sacred cow – an idea held as being above criticism. We have examined how psychological approaches to happiness have distinguished multiple meanings of happiness, and sources of happiness arising from multiple domains, and across multiple structures. As it is used popularly, the notion of happiness is like a stereotype in that it oversimplifies a complex and nuanced phenomenon, and arrests further critical examination. We presented ideas and data demonstrating that to the extent that “more and more” is the principal happiness associated with consumerism, social difficulties will continue to incubate. Alternative approaches to happiness such as positive psychology and the introduction of other values, including those from different philosophies and practices, into our western culture are promising. Going forward, support for social science research stemming from positive psychology and related disciplines is needed. Perhaps more important, is accelerated growth of awareness among institutions and the business community about how serving communal wellbeing is inextricable from more immediate political, and financial concerns.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author details

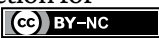
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Subjective Well-Being at the Workplace as a Social Action: Opportunities for Management and Self-Management

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and Irina Leonova*

Abstract

Theoretical model of system determination of subjective well-being at work at the levels of society culture, organizational culture, personality, and psychophysiological level is presented. Subjective well-being at work is considered as a necessary condition for adult working man to experience happiness. The results of research of subjective well-being of personnel of Russian companies (N=425) are presented. It is shown that subjective well-being can be considered as a social action of interactive nature. The key role of organizational culture was revealed. The following indicators of subjective well-being are considered: conformity of individual values of organizational development with the vector of organizational culture, the level of organizational stress, self-assessment of fatigue and health. The role of subjective well-being in the conditions of organizational changes as an emotional regulator of personnel's acceptance of innovations is shown. The effects of subjective well-being include personal involvement in work activities, age-related self-esteem, and personal activity in working with information. The analysis of characteristics of modern economy, which allow employees of companies to acquire meanings of acceptance of innovations in corporate training, is given. The managerial practices contributing to the construction of a culture of resilience are shown.

Keywords: Industry 4.0, innovation, company resilience, organizational stress, subjective well-being/disadvantage, national culture, organizational culture, managerial interaction, personality, work engagement, well-being culture, psychological resilience of personnel

1. Introduction

At all times, the main vector of human efforts in life is aimed at achieving and maintaining happiness as the highest experience of positive emotions. The state of happiness is experienced by a person in different ways depending on his personal characteristics and life circumstances: from getting a piece of bread that allowed him

to stay alive to a complex set of characteristics: positive self-esteem, sense of control over what is happening, openness to the world and experience, optimism, positive social connections, a sense of meaning, and purpose in life [1, 2]. Due to the fact that happiness has such an incomparable value in human life, the phenomenon of happiness has been actively studied from the time of ancient philosophy to the present day, and the potential of these studies is enormous. Questions concerning the nature of happiness, its types, its connection with morality, personal development, efficiency, and self-efficacy have continued to be topical for centuries. A relatively independent topic is the integrative nature of happiness, which depends on the satisfaction a person receives in different types of activities. Thus, even Aristotle noted that different goods are necessary for human happiness; only a combination of different goods forms the basis of human happiness. Until recent decades, most people were engaged in routine, often simple, and hard physical labor, and the problem of happiness in labor did not seem relevant. The results of labor could provide the worker and his family with the benefits that could determine their experience of happiness and, consequently, awaken a person to work more, to develop his competences for a greater reward for labor. In the first third of the twentieth century, industrialization increased the requirements for personal and professional growth of the worker, his creativity aimed at improving the increasingly complex professional activity. Labor becomes for workers a relatively independent sphere of self-realization. All the necessary components of experience of happiness can be found in it: from positive self-esteem to life meanings and goals. A. Adler pointed out three major spheres of human life where a person can achieve success in order to achieve happiness. These are love, friendship, and work. In recent years, company management and researchers in the field of organizational development and human resource psychology have increasingly focused on well-being in the workplace. The use of the concept of well-being rather than happiness is understandable due to the fact that work is only a part of life and only working people, although it is certainly possible to meet people who are happy because they are happy in their work activities. Efforts are made to improve the quality of working life, and often quite costly programs are introduced. Management's efforts to improve the quality of life of employees have not only a humanitarian component, but also an economic one. Business does not just need an employee who cannot yet be replaced by a machine, but a person who voluntarily and independently, based mostly on intrinsic motivation, builds up and realizes his intellectual, creative, and social potential for the benefit of the company's development in external and internal turbulent conditions. This is facilitated by a number of changes taking place in the economy in connection with its globalization and the onset of a new technological mode of Industry 4.0.

Globalization in economic development has led to the fact that, since the works of D. Robb, G. Hamel, L. Valikangas, management considers the problem of companies' efficiency in the conceptual apparatus of viability, which consists of their successful development in the long term under the conditions of manifold turbulence. A viable organization is able to maintain competitiveness with an advantage over time. It achieves this by delivering superior performance, innovating effectively, and adapting to rapid and turbulent changes in markets and technology. Company viability has a multilevel organization, from financial, technological, organizational, and environmental to the psychological resilience of employees [3]. One of the key conditions of enterprise viability is psychological resilience of personnel, which is the ability to maintain its functions without the development of distress in the changing and uncertain conditions of internal and external environment [4, 5].

There are many reasons for the development of distress in employees of modern companies. The perception of threats to a company's viability is increasingly expanding. These include traditional (financial, natural, geopolitical, legal, and physical security risks) and new risks: cyberattacks, innovation, communication channel problems, intellectual property protection, dramatic shifts in consumer tastes, activation of nontraditional competitors, and more recently, pandemic and escalating political tensions. The advent of the new technological mode of Industry 4.0 leads to the formation of new threats and challenges to personnel, including high levels of unemployment, because along with the robotization and digitalization of the economy, a sharp reduction of jobs and much less creation of new ones are possible [6]. Companies are facing the need to introduce innovative production and management technologies, and this introduction is happening at a rate that often exceeds the adaptive capabilities of the employee. There is a growing need for personnel who not only have specific functional professional competences, but who are psychologically ready for technological and managerial innovations, stress-resistant, involved, developing together with the company, taking personal responsibility for continuous qualification improvement in the company, and for self-education [6–8]. Characteristics of in-demand personnel are steadily associated with a young chronological age, so the existing age stereotypes are serious factors in increasing the level of anxiety, worry, and stress among a significant part of employees, reducing their well-being in the workplace [9–11].

There is a growing awareness of the lack of focus on threats. Technological and managerial innovations, on which Industry 4.0 is based, are not a threat, although they create many risks, cause tensions, increase turbulence in the external and internal environment of companies. They are a necessary condition for increasing productivity, competitiveness, and consequently, the viability of the company. The threat is a company's lagging behind in the global innovation process.

The management of companies is far from always able to effectively solve the problem of the company's transition to a sustainable innovative format of development. This is confirmed by the data on Russia's position in the Global Innovation Index. It ranks 45th in the quality of human capital, within 29th place, and only 56th in innovation-related performance [12]. These data show that there are serious managerial barriers that prevent the strengths of companies' personnel from manifesting themselves. Russian enterprises on the average lag behind their foreign competitors in terms of labor productivity by 2–3 times [13]. Labor productivity can be increased only at the expense of growth of innovativeness of economy. Psychological resilience of the personnel in the conditions of implementation of innovations becomes especially significant factor of organizational development.

In Russia, in comparison with the countries traditionally developing in a market economy, there is a set of socio-psychological factors that increase the stressogenic nature of the ongoing innovative transformations, reducing the well-being of the personnel. A significant part of Russians is still far from fully adapting to the change in the paradigm of socioeconomic development from command-administrative to market-innovative and remains committed to the socialist principles of state protectionism. The pension reform created new contradictions between the state and the population, employers and employees, between different generations of workers. The demand for continuous professional development and personal responsibility for the development of one's professional competence is at odds with the habit of waiting for an order from above regarding the need to train new competencies in the traditions of the administrative-command model of the economy, which persists in managerial practices to the present day.

Understanding the importance of human well-being in the workplace has brought to life a new trend in human resource management—the creation of a well-being culture [14]. In the Manifesto of the World Economic Forum in Davos, it is directly noted that A company treats its people with dignity and respect. It honors diversity and strives for continuous improvements in working conditions and employee well-being [15].

The pandemic has led to a dramatic increase in company bankruptcies across businesses, increasing competition at the level of using innovative technology and attracting the best staff. The British Standards Institute (BSI) 2021 report notes that in 2020, for the first time since 2017, the viability of companies declined. There has been a realization of the need for a greater focus on people. The report indicates that prioritizing the health, safety, and well-being of employees, customers, and communities has had a positive impact on restoring organizational resilience [16].

At the same time, F. Herzberg [17] showed the specificity of supporting (hygienic) and motivating factors in labor activity. If we understand well-being as quality of working life, then it can only be a hygienic factor if it does not incorporate motivating influences. On the other hand, many people do not wish to complicate labor and expand responsibilities, which are characteristic of innovation and which, according to F. Herzberg, are the key motivating factors. Significant in understanding is the absence of expressed stress or its acceptable level for work and preservation of health. In conditions of external and internal turbulence, stress is considered to be the main factor reducing the level of psychological resilience of personnel, destroying their ability to cope with the challenges of the new technological order. The most important criterion of culture well-being is the subjective well-being (SW) of the personnel. The notion of subjective is significant in the sense that it emphasizes the possibilities of individual emotional differences in the perception and experience of the organizational and managerial contexts in which the subject of labor is located. At present, we are talking about SW in a highly turbulent environment, that is, in stressogenic conditions that are, at first glance, not compatible with SW. Resistance to innovation may weaken only if the staff for one reason or another will want to work in such conditions, and this, in turn, means that employees will experience positive feelings up to and including pleasure, rather than irritation and even fear, anticipating the next innovations.

The problem of maintaining the viability of companies and personnel is extremely relevant: in the United States and Europe, the first standards for company viability have already been created. Approaches to the prevention and reduction of stress in the workplace are being developed, including standards of stress management to its acceptable level, principles of intervention, and training of individual viability [18–21].

Personnel security is certainly important from the point of view of humanization of management and quality of working life in general, but in the context of the problem of viability of the company is not an end in itself, but only a factor that contributes to the psychological resilience of staff in the context of innovation. The following research questions become relevant:

1. What are the organizational and psychological determinants of staff subjective well-being?
2. Is subjective well-being achievable in the turbulent environment of innovation?
3. What are the possibilities and limitations of managing staff subjective well-being as a factor in staff adoption of innovations?

2. Subjective staff well-being as a social action

2.1 Subjective well-being as an emotional regulator of labor behavior and personnel acceptance of innovations

The phenomenon of SW is not new in psychology in general and in labor psychology in particular. It has been studied in two main directions: hedonistic and eudemonic [22]. Depending on the driving forces behind the emergence and development of SW, the authors have proposed a set of SW indicators. A multidimensional model of SW, including affective, cognitive, social, professional, and psychosomatic dimensions, has been proposed [23]. Many specific socio-psychological conditions and factors of subjective well-being/disadvantage at work have been revealed: from an employee's life satisfaction and his cognitive and motivational characteristics to the vulnerability level of a manager's narcissism [24–26]. Companies develop programs that include professional training opportunities, satisfaction of the employee's out-of-work needs, and appreciation programs, including through digital platforms [27].

The issue of activity, however, is a key one. At the same time, the problem of formation of values, which are predictors of behavior, as a rule, management does not pay enough attention, and in science the psychological mechanisms of their formation are not studied enough to successfully solve the actual managerial problems. This is especially true of adults with pre-labor attitudes and, most importantly, their practices of attaining happiness, which are of the hedonistic rather than eudemonic type. The importance of work to the individual makes it clear that, in seeking to ensure the emotional well-being of staff, managers can contribute to or place a barrier to human happiness, depending on the specifics of the individual's experiences in the workplace. Modern theories of personality help to understand the mechanisms of the emergence of one type of happiness or another. A. Maslow's theory shows the specificity of deficit and higher needs [28]. And recognizing the correctness of this theory in the sense that ontogenesis is the formation of needs in a certain sequence, it is also known that, for one reason or another, the formation of the personality of a considerable number of people is limited to the satisfaction of deficit needs. And only some of them have stable dominant higher needs associated with the search for and giving personal meaning to their lives and its individual components. Outstanding Russian researchers of personality and activity, A.N. Leontiev and B.F. Lomov, have shown that in adult people, the basis of personality is a wealth of connections with the outside world and oneself, represented in an individual hierarchy of motives. The system-forming activity factor "motive-goal" determines a person's behavior on the basis of choosing among competing motives [29, 30].

The hierarchical model of motivational organization as the basis of personality allows us to understand the specifics of the experience of happiness and how the concept of subjective well-being can be correlated with happiness. As Aristotle believed, happiness is the possession of that which is most valuable. And in accordance with the model of the hierarchical organization of the motivational sphere, a person experiences happiness when he has achieved (or received due to various circumstances) the satisfaction of that need, which corresponds to the highest motive in his personal motivational hierarchy. But the satisfaction of less significant personal needs also matters. It is no coincidence that there is an expression: to experience complete happiness. Satisfaction of needs, the motives of which are located at lower levels in the motivational hierarchy, gives the feeling of happiness, which is stronger, the more significant the motive is. Therefore, it is more appropriate to correlate SW with a specific activity or sphere of human activity, personally significant, but still

not the most basic. Thus, knowing the hierarchical dynamic, but at the same time rather stable structure of personality, it is possible to predict which activity will make a greater contribution to the experience of happiness. Certainly, the satisfaction of basic deficit needs provides a sense of well-being and an understanding of the need to maintain it, but with a minimization of intellectual and physical effort. The dominant higher needs are not necessarily related to self-realization and the search for meaning in work activities. But this is just the case when a person can experience happiness, not only SW in labor, because creative labor opens up maximum opportunities for self-fulfillment compared with most other areas of human efforts. Nevertheless, a large proportion of workers are committed not only to labor, but also to other values, such as family, healthy living, charity, care for the environment, and in these cases the dominant higher needs satisfied in several highly significant areas will create an integrated experience of happiness, which, apparently, is true happiness, at least according to Aristotle. It can be reasonably assumed that an employee's behavioral activity will be the higher, the more highly situated the motives are. This is another reason to engage in giving labor and, if it is a matter of adopting innovations, higher meanings. A.N. Leontiev called values the higher motives with a sense-making function.

In recent years, there has been strong evidence that the human capital of a company is personnel with a predominance of positive work-related emotions combined with work activation. Such employees are more engaged, demonstrating performance and quality of work. Negative work-related effects with low rather than high activation prove to be more closely associated with negative work behavior [31].

Whether SW in work activity provides readiness to accept innovations is a question with an ambiguous answer, although there is evidence that the attitude to achieve happiness, provided by the feeling of SW, has its effects in human social relations, health, life, and work satisfaction [32].

Managers in the management of employees should consider on what basis it is expedient to create SW for effective solution of labor tasks, because without such understanding the personnel can stay in a state of SW, for example, in the system of good interpersonal relations of clan culture, avoiding to show initiative or participating in innovative activity. In a bureaucratic UC, SW can be achieved and maintained when a staff member follows all the prescriptions and regulations without going beyond them.

The key basis of SW as applied to labor activity in turbulent conditions should be the desire of the employee for progressive technological and organizational changes against the background of positive emotions connected with labor. SW is an important emotional subjective regulator of labor activity as a whole and personnel's acceptance of innovations, in particular, because administrative management and even rational self-regulation, based on understanding by a labor subject of necessity of innovations as a condition of viability of the company in the modern turbulent world, do not solve the problem of resistance to their introduction.

Under the conditions of innovations, introduction an employee, who has not acquired stable higher needs and corresponding values due to the peculiarities of upbringing and previous experience, needs to find meaning in life as a whole, its separate spheres, including work, is important in itself, as it opens to a person the goals and means of their achievement. Understanding of meaning is based on the trichotomy of purpose, coherence, and significance. Coherence means a sense of comprehensibility and one's life making sense. Purpose means a sense of core goals, aims, and direction in life. Significance is about a sense of life's inherent value and having a life worth living [33]. Giving meaning increases the level of experiencing positive emotions [34]. Positive emotions experienced in the workplace and their

intensity create a sense of being able to regulate affective experiences as a form of relationship control [35].

However, meanings are very different and not all of them contribute to the development of a person as a personality and to the improvement of his labor competence and efficiency. In the context of Industry 4.0, which is based on innovation, the employee needs to go through the transition from one class of meanings to other classes. The first class of meanings, which are the most natural and understandable, are typical of the known and definite world. These meanings refer to individual and social identity, simplify, and structure the world. We must move on to the second and third classes of meanings. The second class includes the meanings of the abnormal, chaotic, illogical, innovative—the unknowable world. It includes those meanings that arise to challenge the integrity of our current known or deterministic world. And to the third class belong the meanings of the connection of the known and the unknown, the meanings that arise in the course of voluntary exploratory behavior. These are existential meanings inherent in individual experience.

Independent transition to the second-grade meanings is possible, but not guaranteed. Training, supervision, and the work of a mentor are necessary here. The transition to the third class of meanings requires the predominance of internal motivation over external motivation. Getting pleasure from such movement fixes the acquired meanings that form the basis of innovative values and determine the active position of an employee against the background of the sense of subjective well-being strengthened not so much by the approval of management as by the realization of the correctness of the choice made, personal renewal, and readiness for further development.

The tasks of SW management make relevant not only studies of the content and structural organization of this phenomenon, but also the implementation of a functional approach, including the development of a model of its determination. T. Parsons' theory of social action [36] may serve as a basis for such a model. This is explained by the fact that SW is an interactive process, in which both external and internal factors play their role.

The subject of labor activity is influenced by its objective factors, which include the conditions of labor activity, which include managerial conditions that manifest themselves in the features of OC and managerial practices implemented by company management.

Since SW is presented to the employee emotionally and has a pronounced positive emotional coloring, he naturally does not remain passive, but in one way or another with a certain level of activity and success aspires to that position in the system of objective physical circumstances and social relations, the totality of which gives him this feeling of SW as opposed to disadvantage.

The employee is able to comprehend his position in the organization, interpret events affecting his position in it and emotional states, look for solutions to arising problems, respond to management requirements, respond to its requirements and expectations as he understands them, improve social relations, develop the necessary competences. He tries to change his position in the organizational conditions, adjusting or resisting the organizational circumstances, can build strategies of behavior, leading, in his opinion, to the improvement of SW in the company. To a large extent, he is guided by subjective experiences of well-being/disadvantage. Depending on his values and motivation, he can to a certain extent reconcile with objective indicators of the quality of working life in the form of remuneration for work, not quite comfortable conditions of working activity. Instability of SW phenomenon in time is clear: organizational conditions and corporate requirements change, family circumstances

of an employee change, as a result of which his labor motivation and labor involvement change. SW is a complex multilevel phenomenon with a complex external and internal determination: from the culture of society and OC to job satisfaction or emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic tension [23].

2.2 Theoretical model of systemic determination of personnel subjective well-being

2.2.1 Personnel security as a social action

The application of T. Parsons' fundamental theory of social action opens up the possibility of the most complete research of system-related determinants of SW in labor activity at the levels of society's culture, the culture of the social context in which one or another phenomenon considered as social action is observed, at the level of personality of people in whose actions the phenomenon appears, and finally, at the level of organism in the fullness of significant psychophysiological and physiological characteristics.

Figure 1 presents a theoretical model of personnel SW determination as a social action. This model allows to understand what complex of influences the person experiences and what at him or at managers there are possibilities to provide his SW. Quite reasonably arise questions about self-management and management of SW.

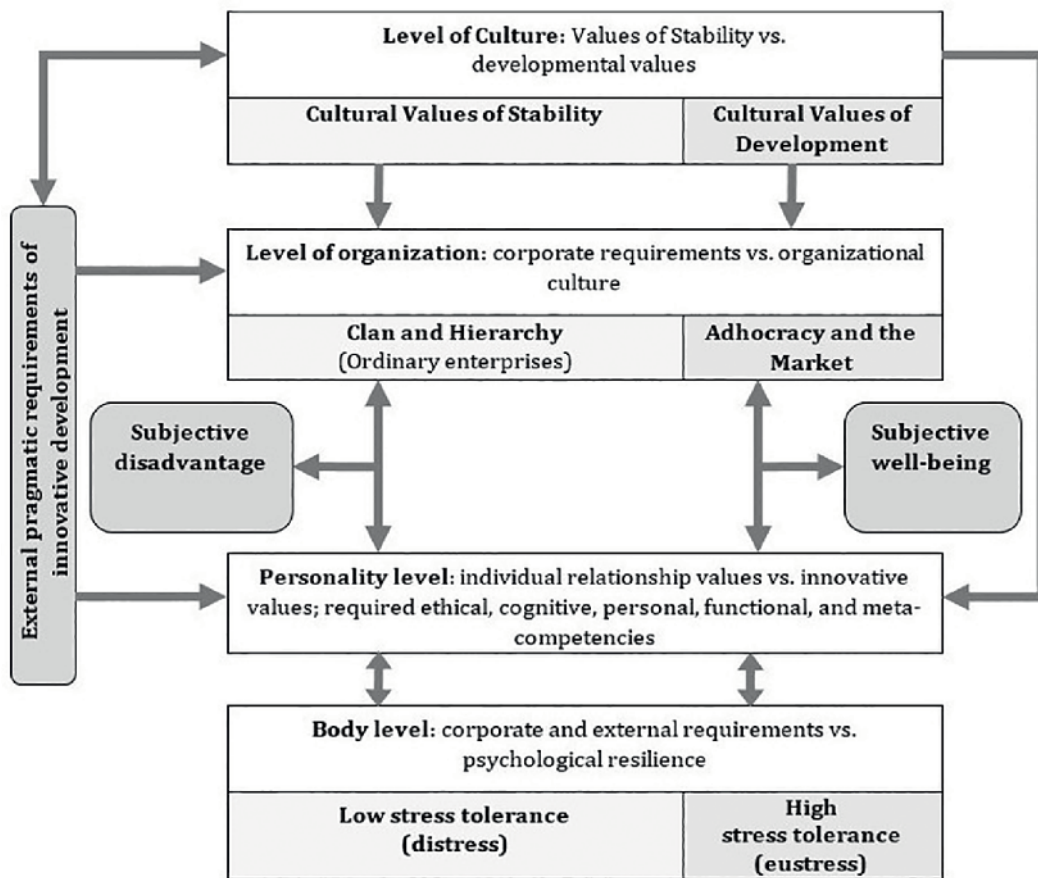


Figure 1. Theoretical model of system determination of staff subjective well-being as a social action.

Certainly, each level of determination includes the whole complex of determinants. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to consider values as the main components of the determination of well-being at the levels of culture of society, organizational culture, and personality, because they are predictors of behavior. Other indicators determine the individual specificity of manifestation of SW. On psychophysiological level of determination stress as a key factor of emotional representation of well-being and psychological resilience/non-vitalization of personnel is considered.

2.2.2 Society's cultural values as a determinant of personnel security

So, the first level—values of national culture—influences a person very much. Personnel of companies is a natural part of society, so, as any member of society, the culture of society tells a person how to behave properly and under what conditions to feel quite well. Studies of the values of Russians constantly show the priority of values of stability and security, which are in a certain contradiction with the risks that innovations bring. However, a worldwide survey of values shows that most Russians have a positive attitude toward the development of technology: up to 76% of young people and 73.5% in the older group ([37], 15–17). This, of course, does not mean that the majority is ready to work under the organizational changes associated with the introduction of innovation. Using an innovative drug is not the same as learning and restructuring one's activities when introducing it into production.

Studies conducted according to Schwartz's methodology, taking into account the specifics of age groups, showed little value consensus in 2011. This means that the general trends identified in the sociological surveys are not unifying, and especially this applies to the value alternative openness to change (independence, independence, propensity for new and risky actions)—preservation (person's dependence on social and, as a rule, routine behavior programs and in addition the search for social protection) [38]. These data are important for understanding the value heterogeneity of Russian society in relation to the variability of living and working conditions.

The priority of the values of stability and security remains at the present time. The least represented in Russia, as well as in most post-socialist countries, is the class of values of growth (values of openness to change and care), which distinguish the population of more prosperous countries [39].

But still, by 2020, there has been a definite shift toward the values of openness from the traditional values of preservation for Russians. It is the result of several reasons: an increase in the quality of life in Russia and a decrease in the real dangers and risks threatening the population, an increase in the availability of new consumer practices, and the influence of global cultural trends that affirm the values of personal choice and risk. An additional factor is the gradual inclusion in the surveyed population (over 15 years) of new generations of Russians, socialized under the conditions of expanded, in comparison with the Soviet time, personal freedom [39]. Thus, the values of culture determine the SW of the Russian in situations characterized by stability and predictability, the desire for novelty does not imply growth and development if the sense of security is violated. But there are also certain positive attitudes toward innovations among a part of the population, and management can use them, contributing to the development of personnel security in conditions of their implementation, supporting supporters and reorienting opponents in value. But, of course, it is easier to stick to proven practices and not to enter into a value conflict with the majority.

2.2.3 Organizational culture as a determinant of the subjective well-being of personnel

The level of organizational conditions manifested in organizational culture (OC) of the company is influenced by values of national culture. G. Hofstede in his research studies noted that high level of collectivism and negative attitude toward uncertainty with short horizon of future orientation are characteristic for OC of the companies of USSR [40]. By now there have been some changes in the culture of society and the need to maintain the viability and competitiveness of the company prompts to follow the values that do not always coincide with the obvious values of national culture. In modern Russia, there are enterprises successfully entering the new technological mode (hereinafter—innovative companies) and companies with long-term problems of transition to innovative format of development, living at the expense of state protectionism (hereinafter—ordinary companies). The models of OC with a pronounced adhocracy component are typical for innovative companies, while for ordinary companies—clan-hierarchical or hierarchical-clan types of OC, preserved from the Soviet period with the administrative-command type of economy (according to the typology of K. Cameron and R. Quinn [41–43]). These OC types are very stable, because their basic values are fully consistent with the culture of society.

Management, wishing for innovative development, faces the task of changing OC. This is a difficult, but solvable problem. This is evidenced by the very fact that there are innovative companies with appropriate types of OC. The necessity to change the OC for conservative managers is a problem, depriving them of the SW, in which they were staying, being in the unity of society values and the hierarchical-clannish model of OC. The requirements of top management of transition to innovative economy either force them to make unsuccessful attempts of organizational changes for many years, to change themselves, or to give way to managers, for one reason or another (family upbringing, specifics of educational institutions) to adherents of innovative values. Such managers experience SW when there is an opportunity to put their efforts into transferring the company to an innovative format of development.

As values are predictors of behavior and have the function of sense-making, value correspondence provides acceptance of necessity of innovative development of the company and creates motivation-target vectors on behavior providing such development, including own professional development and self-development. S. Duchek's fundamental research sums up the results of company viability research, reveals the role of human capital, personnel training and building an open, trusting and learning-oriented OC, capable of providing the psychological resilience of personnel ([44], 215, 236–238). Such OC, according to K. Cameron and R. Quinn's typology, has at its core the innovative values of a critical mass of personnel, which are predictors of viable behavior with the achievement of new levels of adaptation.

For example, OC tells the employee what to choose as a vector of his labor activity: solidarity or competitiveness? innovativeness or traditionalism? The behavior of employees shows management the success/failure of changing the OC.

The role of higher needs and their corresponding meanings in labor activity remain poorly understood. The formation of subjective well-being in the OC is usually created by requests and reinforcement of correct behavior on the part of managers. The approval of managers creates a sense of SW that the employee wants to retain or reinforce. Therefore, in different types of OC, staff SW can be formed on a different behavioral basis. Innovative demand in the bureaucratic management paradigm generates stress and resistance of the personnel with the meanings of the

stable world. Happiness in labor activity and corresponding activity at the level of enthusiasm accompanied by eustress can be expected, if the employee has formed meanings of acceptance of innovations and successfully moves in achievement of the purposes generated by these meanings.

2.2.4 Level of personal determination of subjective well-being of the personnel

At the level of personal determination, individual values of the employee induce him to follow or resist corporate requirements, to aspire to social and organizational safety, or to creative self-realization in work, connected with constant introduction of technological and managerial innovations.

Lack of value conformity generates a value conflict intrapersonal and between the employee and the corporate policy of the company, usually hidden, but very strong [43], especially when such conflict has a massive nature and forms the basis of the organizational culture (OC) of the company. Their latency makes them especially strong, because no one denies the need for innovation, but also to take them in their work most of the staff is not willing. Value conflicts, like any other, violate the SW and cause a desire to return to the attractive conflict-free past.

The very fact of value alignment increases the confidence of the staff in management and the level of employee SW. Moreover, controlled changes in OC can and do reduce the dependence of employee values and behavior on the culture of society. In a certain sense, the issue of reducing such influence may be a cause for controversy of an important worldview nature, but the challenges facing the business, related to the viability of the company in the global economy, contribute to the translation of this issue into a specific plane. In turn, employees who become adherents of innovation have an impact on the culture of society, making it more innovative.

Employees have significant differences in the affective, cognitive, social, professional, and psychosomatic dimensions of SW, depending on individual possession of the necessary set of competencies of all types: from ethical, personal, and cognitive to functional and metacompetencies [45] and differently feel the psychological costs of innovation, examples of which are presented in **Table 1** ([46], 134).

Needs (by A. Maslow)	Costs of innovation	Socio-psychological effects
Homeostatic	Changing dynamic stereotypes, increasing stress (training, professional development, mastering new technologies)	Fatigue, malaise
Security	Anxiety over perceived or real lack of competence. Worries about job security, stress of change, possible demotion of status	Mistrust of management, declining organizational loyalty, hidden conflicts
Acceptance and communication	Reduction of interpersonal communication, acceptance by management depending on production efficiency in the context of innovation	Reduced work motivation, the priority of social roles of family and private life, strengthening clan values that inhibit organizational development
Self-Esteem	Doubts about your competence	
Self-Realization	Lack of competence	

Table 1.
Examples of the psychological costs of innovation.

It should be taken into account that in the conditions of innovative development, the content of competences becomes very dynamic; that is why the advanced corporate training acquires special importance. Such training is positively perceived by the personnel as it helps to achieve real value-determined compliance with the requirements of the developing company. Moreover, it makes the future more certain and, therefore, less stressful. Specific competences and the level of their relative importance in the overall competence of an employee naturally differ depending on the type of business, but the value fit remains a systemic factor of an employee's SW.

Value reorientation and the formation of motivation for labor activity and professional development in the conditions of the introduction of innovations are realized without increasing the value conflict and the resistance associated with it, if the changes carried out are not accompanied by a strong stress of change. We are talking about the determination of SW at the psychophysiological level.

2.2.5 Psychophysiological level of determination of subjective well-being of the personnel

The psychophysiological level of determination of SW is influenced by the first three levels. For example, an employee would like to continue working, but the stress of not fulfilling traditional obligations (for example, the roles of grandparents are expected in the family) stops. Some employees' desire for stability causes dissatisfaction with management, creating a demand to learn new technologies. Other employees would like to use new technologies, but are stopped by personal anxiety: what if they fail. The low level of performance may not allow you to actively improve your skills, especially after a day of work: fatigue develops too quickly. And these examples could go on.

High level of stress experienced by employees increases accidents, causes decision-making errors, reduces activity efficiency up to its complete disintegration, increases conflict of labor relations, causes desire to consume alcohol and psychoactive substances, to stop working, to retire, promotes professional burnout, destroys health. Stress negatively affects the quality of life of an employee in the workplace and outside the organization, negatively affects family relationships, connections with close people [47–54]. Thus, anxiety, worry as precursors of distress, stress intensification up to its most unfavorable forms with its transition to the chronic stage are the key conditions and determinants of the decrease in the resilience of the staff, the disadvantage of the employee in the workplace and in life activity in general.

The brief analysis of determination of SW in the conditions of introduction of innovations allows to define OC of the company with a vector of its development as a system-forming determinant. It is explained by the fact that OC, solving the problems of external adaptation and internal integration [55], firstly, is a kind of psychological buffer between the culture of society and personnel, mitigating the influence of cultural values, which, in particular in Russia, are the factors inhibiting the innovative development. Secondly, OC under certain conditions is a carrier and transmitter of values and behaviors to the personnel that contribute to the innovative development of the company. Thirdly, OC provides organizational support (corporate training, encouragement of self-education, and adoption of innovations) to employees motivated for development together with the company and their labor involvement through management practices appropriate to its

type. And, finally, OC is able to reduce the stress of change and even promote the eustress that accompanies motivated creative work, generating and supporting the SW of the staff.

Overcoming of destructive influence of stress is that share of happiness, which brings labor activity in his experience. SW in labor activity extends to the experience of happiness in family and friendship at the expense of the positive emotional states brought into these types of relations.

The variability of the value basis of OC of Russian companies allows us to investigate the specifics of personnel security in innovative companies that successfully enter the technological mode of industry 4.0 and companies with many years of difficulties in transition to the innovative format of development (hereinafter referred to as ordinary companies).

2.3 Subjective personnel well-being in organizational cultures of different types: results of empirical research

2.3.1 Design of the empirical study

The bases of the empirical study were two manufacturing companies (innovative and ordinary) and two medical companies (innovative and ordinary). The innovative companies are highly viable, the management of ordinary companies sets the objectives of innovative development, but experiences significant resistance from the staff.

Type OC in innovative companies is based on market values with preservation of the developed relations in collectives and the expressed innovative component (on typology C.Cameron-R.Quinn) [41]. The hierarchical component in the companies is less represented than the market component. Type OC of ordinary companies is hierarchical-clannish with minimal representation of an innovative component. In the industrial companies, there are gyms, in medical—there are practically no programs, except for the corporate celebrations common for all companies. Corporate training is conducted in all companies. In ordinary companies, it is more formal, the priority is given to theoretical classes, and a certificate of completion of the program is obligatory. In innovative companies, corporate training is carried out with a shift in the balance of theoretical and practical training in favor of practice, the project method and team work are used, independent professional development in third-party organizations and internships are supported. However, none of the companies work on the purposeful development of the meanings of innovative development. Innovative values are formed spontaneously.

Respondents: Engineers and doctors of resident and innovative companies, men of three age groups: under 35, 35–59, 60, and older (N=425). The work experience of each respondent is less than 3 years, which means that the employees are fully adapted to the organizational conditions of the companies. The results of the study of female staff SW are presented in earlier publications [56, 57].

Methods: At the level of society's culture, the results of sociological research on the general cultural values of the Russians were analyzed. Characteristics of organizational culture were studied using the OCAI method of K. Cameron and R. Quinn. Power distance was studied with the help of the author's questionnaire.

Questionnaire question. How does your immediate supervisor address your subordinates in a work situation if he/she is satisfied or dissatisfied with the employee's work? Check the following boxes in the following form.

Score	The form of address	In a work situation.					
		Under 35		35–59		60 and over	
		Satisfied	Not satisfied.	Satisfied	Not satisfied.	Satisfied	Not satisfied.
5	By surname						
4	By name and patronymic						
3	By full name						
2	By patronymic.						
1	By the name of						

At the personality level, as indicators of SW were studied using the author’s questionnaire, combining questions with direct scaling, self-assessment of fatigue from work activities and organizational conditions, self-assessment of health, psychological well-being in the labor collective. Example of questions of the Questionnaire “Subjective well-being in the workplace”:

Question 5.2.

Is everything okay with your cardiovascular system?

–5 ___ –4 ___ –3 ___ –2 ___ –1 ___ 0 ___ +1 ___ +2 ___ +3 ___ +4 ___ +5

I literally feel like an invalid I feel completely healthy.

At the psychophysiological level of SW determination, the experienced organizational stress was evaluated using R. Kessler’s test [58]. The effects of SW included values of innovative organizational development, personal involvement in the work process, age-related self-esteem, and independent work on self-education. Priorities in values of organizational development are revealed with the help of OCAI method of K. Cameron and R. Quinn. The method of personal self-identification by M. Kuhn and T. McPartland [59] was used to determine personal involvement in work activities. Behavioral characteristics were studied with the help of the author’s questionnaire, the answers to the questions of which involve checking.

Example of questions in the “Working with Information in Professional Activity” questionnaire:

Question 4: How often do you refer to publications on professional Russian sites?

- 4.1. very day ___ (5 points)
- 4.2. Every week ___ (4 points).
- 4.3. Every month ___ (3 points)
- 4.4. Several times a year ___ (1 point)
- 4.5. Never ___ (0 points)

Question 5: Which Russian professional websites do you find most useful in your professional field?

2.3.2 Key results of the empirical study of personnel security of ordinary and innovative Russian companies

Indicators of subjective well-being in labor activity: The results are presented in **Tables 2** and **3**.

The data in **Table 2** show that SW of the personnel of innovative and ordinary companies, regardless of the sphere of business and age of the respondents, significantly differs by all studied indicators: fatigue, self-assessment of health, psychological well-being in the work collective. It is noteworthy that employees of innovative companies feel fatigue from work significantly less than their colleagues and peers in ordinary companies. The exception is employees older than 60 years old, the differences in the degree of fatigue from work do not reach the level of statistical significance.

This data suggests that the fear of employees of ordinary companies to innovate is vain. Work with new technologies after mastering them will be less time-consuming and leave more energy for non-labor activities. Organizational fatigue will also go away. Regardless of age, organizational fatigue in innovative companies is less than in ordinary companies. This is especially true for younger employees, with a score of 8.8 at an ordinary company versus 3.1 at an innovative company for engineers, $p \leq 0.01$ and 8.7 at an innovative clinic versus 4.5 at an ordinary clinic, $p \leq 0.01$. These data show that university training is more likely to match the organizational conditions of innovative companies, and the management requirements of ordinary companies are too heavy for young employees, stifling their creativity and initiative. Their work fatigue is significantly less than that of the organizational conditions. Then comes adaptation to these demands, and only in the senior group of resident physicians does fatigue from organizational conditions significantly exceed fatigue from work activities. The explanation most likely lies in the fact that this age group of doctors with their work algorithms developed over many years and a reputation as an experienced doctor is the most unpleasant and tiring of the management requirements of switching to innovative work methods (5.7 points of fatigue from organizational conditions versus 3.2 points of fatigue from labor activity, which, incidentally, is the minimum level of fatigue from labor activity for a doctor).

We can see that the self-assessment of health, both in relation to the cardiovascular system and the nervous system, is also better in most cases in innovative companies. The differences do not reach statistical significance only in the group of young doctors. They still feel very well, while their peer engineers feel healthier in innovative companies. Self-assessment of health declines somewhat with age, especially with regard to the cardiovascular system, but it is still higher in innovative companies. Particularly appealing is the fact that employees of innovative companies have a better nervous system condition: even at the age of over 60, it reaches 3.6 and 4.5 points against 2.6 and 2.3 points for employees of ordinary companies.

This is no coincidence. The study examined the health indicators most clearly associated with stress. It can be seen that stress indicators are significantly higher in ordinary companies than in innovative ones. In all cases, they averaged higher than 20 points on the R. Kessler scales. The young doctors of the ordinary company have a stress index of 32.6 points. It is also high in the young doctors of the innovative clinic—26.5 points, but still significantly lower. The high level of stress in young doctors seems to be related to the high responsibility of their work activity. There is data in the literature that high social responsibility with a high level of stress may

Woz plant	Company	Stress	Power Distance		Fatigue			Health			Psychological well-being in the work collective
			Satisfied	Type of situation	TD	EI	W	CC	NS		
										Not satisfied.	
Up to 35	OP	20.5	3.6	4.4	**	7.3	8.8	*	2.4	1.9	-2.3
	IP	14.0	2.0	3.3	**	4.4	3.1	*	3.6	2.9	3.4
	U	*	**	**	**	**	**	**	*	*	**
35-59	OM	32.6	3.6	4.5	**	6.1	8.7	**	1.6	1.9	0.8
	IM	26.5	2.2	2.5	—	5.5	4.5	—	1.9	2.1	3.2
	U	**	**	**	**	*	**	**	—	—	**
Up to 35	OP	23.0	3.8	4.5	**	7.6	7.2	—	1.5	2.6	-2.6
	IP	13.4	2.1	3.5	**	5.7	4.3	*	3.6	4.1	3.7
	U	**	**	**	**	*	*	*	**	**	**
35-59	OM	27.5	3.9	4.5	*	6.2	6.9	—	1.5	2.0	2.4
	IM	22.5	3.4	4.0	—	4.6	5.0	—	2.0	3.6	4.2
	U	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

From 60	OP	21.8	3.7	4.8	*	5.0	4.9	—	0.7	2.6	1.5
	IP	16.5	2.0	3.3	**	4.5	3.1	**	2.1	3.6	3.5
	U	*	**	**	*	—	*	*	*	*	*
	OM	27.1	4.0	4.4	—	3.2	5.7	*	1.1	2.3	1.8
	IM	16.9	3.5	3.5		2.7	2.9	—	2.4	4.5	4.4
	U	**	—	*	**	—	**	*	*	**	**

OP: ordinary production; IP: innovative production companies; OM: ordinary medical; IM: innovative medical companies; OU: organizational fatigue; S/O: self-esteem; CC: cardiovascular system condition; and NS: nervous system condition.
 * Statistical significance of differences by Mann-Whitney U-test; Wilcoxon W-test: $p \leq 0.05$.
 ** $p \leq 0.01$.

Table 2.
 Subjective well-being of male staff of ordinal and innovative manufacturing and medical companies.

not reduce SW [60]. Here it can be attributed to the young doctors of an innovative clinic, but not to the doctors of an ordinary clinic, because more than 30 points according to R. Kessler correspond to a pronounced distress. Undoubtedly, we are talking about a self-assessment that may reflect severe experiences at the level of subjective distress, but not associated with serious mental distress. Nevertheless, the average stress scores in all age groups of respondents exceeded 20 points, which indicates a pronounced subjective disorder. In all age groups of the personnel of innovative companies, stress indicators do not exceed 20 points, with the exception of doctors not only young, but also middle-aged, but in ordinaries their peers' stress is significantly higher.

Special attention should be paid to the indicators of psychological well-being in the work collective. Here we can see that the indicators in innovative companies are significantly higher. In ordinary companies, young employees and middle-aged engineers have indicators in the zone of negative values or close to zero and become somewhat higher along with adaptation to organizational conditions. At first glance, this is paradoxical data. Personnel of ordinary companies work in the organizational culture with a pronounced clan component and strive for its unconditional dominance. The clan component with the value of maintaining good relations is usually a good psychological protection for employees at the expense of solidarity, even exceeding the measure of maintaining an acceptable level of work performance [61]. In situations of attempts to introduce innovations by the management of ordinary companies, the function of psychological protection ceases to work. Conflicting relations and contradictions increase in the units, anxiety and stress experiences grow, which causes a sense of subjective disadvantage.

Table 2 contains a factor that is an inherent characteristic of hierarchical-clannish OC, described by G. Hofstede as applied to the then Soviet and now Russian management model—a long power distance, the separation of managers and executives. It is significantly shorter in innovative companies. In ordinary companies, even when the manager is satisfied with the actions of his subordinates, the distance is between 3.6 and 3.9 points, whereas in innovative companies, the range is 2.0–3.5 points. In situations where the manager is not satisfied with the actions of the subordinate, in ordinary companies, the distance always increases to high values in the interval of 4.4–4.8 points with a maximum of 5 points. The exception is the senior doctors. In their case the increase in distance does not reach the level of statistical significance, although the distance is quite pronounced. These data add to the picture of provocation of subordinates' stress by the supervisor. Performers do not feel the psychological opportunity to tell the manager about their doubts and difficulties cannot count on help and support. A supervisor implements an autocratic model of managerial interaction [62]. He is a source of demands, control, anxiety, fears, strong stress, formation of a sense of subjective disadvantage.

In innovative companies, managers are much more accessible. This is especially noticeable in the innovation clinic. There, even when the manager is dissatisfied, he does not lengthen the distance significantly. This shows the special sensitivity of the medical manager, who understands that the stress created by an increase in power distance can provoke a high level of stress, the consequence of which can be errors at the cost of a human life. The management of innovative companies implements a supportive model of managerial interaction [62], which is a factor of stress prevention and SW in difficult conditions.

Table 3 shows the effects of SW of the personnel of innovative and ordinary companies.

Woz plant	Com of the company	Values components of organizational culture				Personal Involvement		S/o age	Independent work with professional information		
		Clan	Desirable	W	Adhocracy	W	Current			Perspective (5 years)	
Up to 35	OP	22.9	37.8	**	10.4	12.8	—	1.4	1.1	10.6	10.5
	IP	17.6	23.9	*	28.3	33.2	*	1.9	2.2	-2.8	21.0
	U	*	*	**	**	**	**	*	*	**	*
35-59	OM	25.4	28.9	*	17.1	18.8	—	1.5	1.5	10.7	14.5
	IM	20.8	20.1	—	18.8	23.0	*	2.3	2.4	-1.7	32.3
	U	*	*	**	—	*	*	*	*	**	**
Up to 35	OP	28.3	38.2	*	11.4	12.4	—	1.6	0.6	7.3	12.5
	IP	17.4	18.3	—	27.5	33.4	*	1.9	1.6	-6.0	24.5
	U	*	**	**	**	**	**	*	*	**	*
35-59	OM	30.9	35.7	T	16.8	18.4	—	1.7	1.8	10.3	12.5
	IM	27.7	21.3	—	24.1	28.4	*	2.2	2.5	-3.2	35.5
	U	*	*	**	*	**	*	T	*	**	**

From 60	OP	24.1	35.0	*	18.2	18.8	—	1.25	0.3	8.8	5.5
	IP	16.5	21.8	T	26.0	31.5	*	1.5	1.7	-7.4	30.3
	U	*	*	*	**	**		T	*	**	**
	OM	29.7	38.4	*	18.2	18.8	—	1.8	1.1	5.6	7.5
	IM	20.2	25.8	T	26.0	31.5	*	2.4	2.2	-3.2	20.5
	U	*	*	*	**	**		*	*	**	**

OP: ordinary manufacturing; IP: innovative manufacturing companies; OM: ordinary medical; IM: innovative medical companies; In the column Self-work with professional information the sum of scores on 10 questions, the maximum score is 50. T - trend, - no statistically significant differences.
 * Statistical significance of differences by Mann-Whitney U test; Wilcoxon W test: $p \leq 0.05$.
 ** $p \leq 0.01$.

Table 3.
 Effects of subjective well-being/disadvantage of male staff of ordinary and innovative companies.

These data show that the individual values of personnel in Russia with regard to the organizational development of companies differ significantly in the key areas of OC development: clan and adhocracy. It can be seen that innovative and ordinal companies, regardless of the sphere of business, differ significantly in these indicators of both the current state of OC and the prospective one. The clan component is higher in all cases of comparison, and its representation fluctuates between 22.9 and 30.9% in ordinal companies, and the personnel want to strengthen it up to 28.9–38.2%. The minimal indicator of the desire to develop the company according to the clan type is typical for young doctors, but the management does not use this opportunity, and all other age groups have higher indicators with the maximum in doctors of the older age group. Thus, one can see an increase in conservative attitudes among physicians along with age. In engineers, the rates of adherence to the clan component of OC are similar across age groups.

There is also a tendency to want to strengthen the existing level of the clan component of the OC in innovative companies. This level in the current OC is represented in the interval of 16.5–27.7%, and the interval of 20.1–25.8% is desirable, that is significantly lower than it takes place in ordinary companies. It is noteworthy that the minimum level of the clan component in innovative companies is also recorded in young doctors, and the maximum in older doctors, as in ordinary companies. This indicates that the age trend of increasing clan commitment is more pronounced in medical labor.

Analysis of staff attitudes toward the adhocracy component of OC shows significant differences between innovative and ordinary companies. The actual level of adhocracy in the OC of innovative companies in most cases is significantly higher than in ordinary companies: the interval is 18.8–28.3% in innovative companies against 10.4–18.2%. Employees of ordinary companies wish to strengthen the adhocracy component, statistically significantly not exceeding the existing indicators. Employees of innovative companies are committed to innovative development, and their desires for innovativeness lie between 23.0 and 33.4%. The exception is the evaluations of young doctors of the innovation clinic. Their level of innovativeness appears to be lower than for all other groups and is not statistically significantly different from the corresponding assessments in the ordinary company. It is also interesting that they lag significantly behind their older colleagues in their desires for innovativeness. Apparently, they expected a higher level of innovative technology, but also too much growth frightens them. If we recall the maximum level of stress in this group of respondents (26.5 points, **Table 2**), the values of innovativeness indicators determined by too high professional responsibility become clear.

Other effects of SW in innovative companies were also revealed. First of all, it is a higher level of labor involvement both at the moment of research and in a 5-year perspective. The indicators of involvement of older age groups seem to be worthy of special attention. While young and middle-aged employees are characterized by close indicators of actual and prospective engagement, with significantly higher indicators in innovative companies, older employees in ordinary companies are characterized by a sharp decline in prospective engagement. In engineers from 1.25 points to 0.3 points, $p \leq 0.01$, and in physicians from 1.8 points to 1.1 points, $p \leq 0.01$. In innovation companies, older engineers have lower engagement scores than younger age groups, but still significantly higher than peers working in an ordinary company and do not decline in prospective engagement (1.5 and 1.7 points). For older physicians, engagement scores remain high and continue to be so prospectively (2.4 and 2.2 points). These data indicate a high level of SW of senior staff in innovative companies.

Work at innovative companies encourages employees not only to improve their qualifications, which is also done at ordinary companies, but also to work independently with professional information. One can see significant differences in the involvement of the staff of innovative and ordinary companies in this process. Doctors are more involved than engineers. But it should be mentioned here that manufacturing companies have translation bureaus, and this can partially explain the differences in the performance of engineers and doctors. In addition, doctors seem to be more inclined to work on their own professional reputation than engineers, due to the specific nature of their work.

Indicators of employees' self-assessment of age deserve special attention. At innovative companies, employees feel significantly younger than their chronological age, unlike their peers at ordinary companies. Employees at ordinary companies feel significantly older. Young engineers and doctors feel, on average, more than 10 years older than their chronological age, while their peers at innovative companies are not much, but younger: 1.7–2.8 years. Most likely, there is a very strong emotional component in the assessment of one's age sense of self by young employees of ordinary companies, created by bureaucratic organizational conditions, formal requirements without the provision of help and support. For older ages, there is a layering of fatigue and declining health. The self-esteem of older employees of innovative companies seems particularly significant: engineers feel 7.4 years younger on average, doctors 3.2 years younger. The difference in assessments seems to be related to the fact that doctors more adequately assess their condition than engineers. These scores explain well the high willingness of older employees to continue their work activities and their involvement in the work process. They feel SW in the workplace and do not want to lose it, unlike senior employees of ordinary companies. Even as they continue to work, they, deprived of a sense of SW, are more likely to support the financial well-being of their families with their work. Were it not for this factor, they would likely leave the workplace, which makes them tired, losing their health, and carrying the stress of the management demands of engaging in innovative activities.

The readiness of employees to strengthen innovation in companies with a pronounced adhocracy component in the OC indicates that their SW, manifested in high work capacity (low level of fatigue), good health, good psychological well-being in the workplace with a low level of stress, indicates that the innovative format of their companies not only does not destroy the achieved level of SW, but also supports it by understanding the need and opportunity to be at the forefront of innovative development.

And, on the contrary, employees of ordinary companies are afraid of increasing innovativeness, although they do not deny its necessity. But the organizational conditions manifested in the OC restrain the adoption of innovation by the staff and even prevent them. Experienced feeling of subjective disadvantage deprives the staff of the desire to cooperate with management. Employees want growth of a clannish component of OC, but results of research show that in the conditions of introduction of innovations in hierarchical-clannish model of OC aspiration to psychological protection at the expense of support of good relations of SW is not reached.

If we analyze SW indicators, it seems that the age self-assessment of employees can be reasonably considered an integrative indicator. Behind the age self-assessment there is a phenomenon of socio-psychological age of the personnel: managers also assess the personnel as "older," irrespective of chronological age in problem companies and as "younger" in innovative companies ([46], 200), [47, 48]. **Figure 2** shows the correlations between OC values and significant indicators of SW.

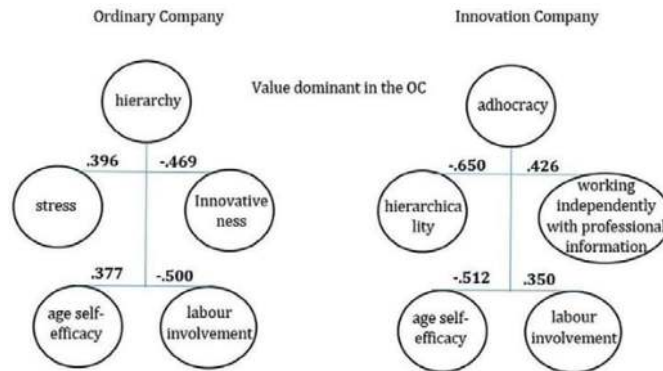


Figure 2. Correlations between the dominant values of the organizational culture of companies and the indicators of SW of employees in the context of innovation.

We can see that in the conditions of OC with the dominance of hierarchy, typical for ordinary companies, hierarchy and labor involvement are characterized by a statistically significant inverse relationship, hierarchy denies innovativeness, increases the level of stress experienced by the staff and positively connected with the older age self-perception (subjective disadvantage). The opposite situation in OC with the dominance of innovativeness. The more innovative values are represented in OC, the younger (subjective well-being) employees feel, the more they are personally involved in labor activity, the more they do not like hierarchy. The connection between adhocracy and the actual behavior of an employee to develop his/her professional competence through self-education is also significant.

Summarizing the analysis of the results obtained, it should be noted that the transition to an innovative format of development took place over more than 20 years, and in ordinary companies did not take place at all, despite the setting by management of innovative development goals. Technological progress in innovative companies occurred at the expense of management's efforts to change organizational culture and the use of management practices corresponding to this change. As a result of many years of shaping the SW of employees in the context of adopting innovation, there has been a transformation of employee values from stability and relationships in favor of innovation and success in a competitive environment. Could this change have occurred more quickly? It seems that the management of companies did not use all resources in the development of personnel of companies. And first of all, a semantic resource. Training, first of all, connected with personal development, is positively perceived by the personnel, gives daily positive emotions, raises SW of the personnel [63, 64].

Modern labor offers ample opportunity to find and give meaning to it. For example, the meanings of conscious participation in a "green" economy compared with an economy that creates material goods, to the detriment of the environment, the very basis of life, are open to personnel with higher needs. But for personnel with predominantly deficit needs are not independently accessible without special assistance, for example, through corporate training. "Green" economy is able to give the necessary and desirable benefits to both, but only on the basis of the introduction of innovative technologies. This connection opens the finding of personal meanings by employees of innovative companies or those transitioning to an innovative format of development and experiencing significant difficulties in connection with this transition, and the stress associated with it. The ESG Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance Standards provide assistance in finding personal meanings in

the adoption of innovation. In December 2019, the UK Financial Reporting Council published an updated version of its Code of Governance for Institutional Investors and their Advisors, setting out the highest requirements for responsible governance. It states very clearly that the purpose of governance should be “to create long-term value for clients and beneficiaries, leading to sustainable benefits for the economy, the environment and society” [65]. In Russia, few top managers know about these standards, but practically nothing is known to executives, though for economy they are a basis of attraction of investors, and for employees they have huge humanitarian value, including in finding meanings and purposes of development in labor activity, gaining of reliable basis for SW, and happiness in labor activity in conditions of acceptance of innovations. This new direction of research and management practice certainly needs to be tested, but the prospects seem inspiring.

3. Conclusions

Subjective well-being of personnel is both a humanitarian task of management and a factor of psychological resilience of company personnel, which manifests itself in the involvement of personnel in the innovative development of companies in turbulent conditions of external and internal environment. Subjective well-being has functions of increasing trust to management and emotional regulator of personnel's acceptance of innovations. The formation of subjective well-being as an interactive social action takes place in the context of its systemic determination by the culture of society, organizational culture, personality, and organism. The key determinant of SW is the company's OC, which is an intermediary between the influences of the culture of society and the requirements of management, solving the problems of innovative development, a carrier and translator of innovative values and their corresponding behavior patterns, a factor of organizational stress prevention.

Innovativeness in itself is a factor of SW if it is realized in the model of OC, having a pronounced adhocracy component, and in the corresponding management practices. In this case values of development, model of administrative interaction realized by management, and supporting labor and educational efforts of employees, can be a basis of formation of viable culture.

Personnel security is provided by five basic directions of work of management. The first is associated with the necessary changes in the organizational culture of the company in the direction of achieving the goals of innovative development and is based not only on the value of innovation, but also the value of employees as human capital of the company. If the value of the employee is not the true value of management, it is impossible to implement management practices that provide value reorientation and a new value commitment of staff, and the organizational situation continues to preserve the value conflict and confrontation between management and the rest of the staff. The second direction is manifested in the work to reduce or even remove the psychological costs of innovation. The third is in the supportive style of managerial interaction, which is established by management up to service leadership and ensures that employees trust managers as sources of help in solving complex problems. Fourth, the prevention of stress of innovation, which is realized in the anticipation of changes and preliminary preparation for them on the basis of wide informing the staff about the upcoming changes and the guarantee of preparation for them. And the last, positive reinforcement in terms of behavioral psychology. The problem is that they are usually available to all employees, regardless of the attitude

to innovative change, regardless of productivity and quality of work. This approach demotivates the adherents of innovation and creates opportunities to retain personnel focused on minimizing efforts to achieve organizational goals. In this case, programs become a cost, not an investment, and frustrate management. The serious restrictions in realization of these directions can be the generalized approach to the personnel as having general characteristics without taking into account different readiness of employees to accept innovations, adherence to strengthening of a clannish component of OK, desired by the most part of the personnel, absence of competence in realization of supporting and service management interaction.

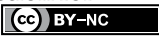
A separate, not used yet, resource of creation of SW and happiness in labor activity can be meaningful development of the personnel, creating an essential impulse of activity in the direction of increase of innovativeness in labor. It seems that use of this resource will give the effects beyond labor activity. The transition to the meaningfulness of innovative labor, from the meanings of the known world to the meaningfulness of a more complex world and itself in it, in the movement to the unknown, the loss of anxiety and fear of the new, will certainly be important in other areas of human practice and in the education of new generations, already more ready to search for meanings and happiness.

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Chapter 18

(Material) Well-Being in Economics: Beyond GDP

Marisol Manfredi

Abstract

This chapter examines the current notion of well-being utilized in the mainstream economics, which is based on the utilitarian philosophy. The analysis focuses on the alternative proposals to expand beyond the existing framework, such as Easterlin's paradox, multidimensional indexes of well-being, capabilities approach, and the cosmivision of the indigenous traditions. The chapter first explores the main definition of happiness and equilibrium of ancient Greek philosophers. Secondly, the chapter investigates the mainstream corpus of Economics with the Utilitarianism as a moral core. Many contradictions and inconsistencies in the implementation of the notion of well-being are unfolded. Thirdly, key proposals to revolutionize the notion are introduced. Given the sociological and environmental problems the Anthropocene has caused, and these ideas could lead to original and inspiring solutions.

Keywords: well-being, well-fare, happiness, economics, policy-making, index, GDP, HDI, sustainability, degrowth

1. Introduction

The fact that the endless acquisition of wealth has been hailed as the surest path to happiness does not raise many eyebrows, especially among economists. Usually, if economic growth is a problem, it is because there is not enough of it: the more, the better. The blindness pursuit of economic growth—operationalized through the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—aims for the production of goods and services, despite their qualitative characteristics, at large scale, which is “automatically” converted into well-being, and therefore, a “better” country/state.

However, paradoxically, the growth-centered economy made us witness the world changing for the ecological worse with the onslaught on nature reaching an unprecedented intensity, not to mention socio-democratic aspects of it.

Therefore, dismantling the idea of endless material growth as an axiomatic necessity of countries has reached exceptional significance. The beating heart of this change lies in alternative pathways to well-being in Economics, beyond its material aspects, which is the primary concern of this chapter. It is fundamental to question what the word “well-being” implies for current states and policy-makers. All in all, if the well-being of the people is one of the fundamental objectives of every political economy, then it is necessary to unfold what this construct embeds to understand the current state of affairs of our states nowadays.

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the first notion of happiness available in the literature: the concept of *eudaimonia* by the ancient Greek philosophers, that it has been completely forgotten inside the mainstream corpus of Economics with the arrival of the Utilitarianism, which is presented in Section 3. Also, this section presented the consequences of using this moral theory as the dominant informational base, leading to the pursuit of growth as a main objective of every state, monitored by the GDP. Finally, Section 4 shows and discusses recent and alternative proposals that expand the notion of material well-being (and the utilitarian philosophy): the Easterlin's paradox, which demonstrates that more income does not imply more happiness; the existence and development of multidimensional indexes of well-being that consider subjective components; the Amartya Sen's capabilities approach that embeds a higher notion including education and health beyond the material; and the cosmovision of *Buen Vivir*, a Latinamerican indigenous tradition that understands well-being as the harmony with nature.

2. Eudaimonia: the base of happiness in ancient Greek Philosophy

The word "happiness" has been present in the field of Economics since the thoughts of the ancient Greeks. With the concept of *eudaimonia*, they refer to happiness as a balanced state, as a form or art of living, as a lasting and prolonged enjoyment, and not as a mere succession of fleeting and intermittent moments of satisfaction [1]. This art of living was the daily practice of the activities that belong to the soul, that, when doing so, humans experimented the highest state of happiness.

Aristotle distinguished two types of value: value-of-use and value-of-change, a dichotomy later explained entirely by Smith. The former referred to the intrinsic aptitude of a good to satisfy a need, and the latter depended on the relative scarcity or abundance of the good. In other words, the use-value of a precise object consists of its particular contribution to well-being. For example, wine provides food and friendship, two fundamental human needs, so it possesses use-value. Cocaine, on the contrary, which does not provide neither food nor friendship nor any other fundamental component of well-being, does not have use-value. The fact that "I prefer crack to wine does not alter this fact; it simply shows me to have corrupt taste" [2]. This is an important differentiation for understanding the preference satisfaction theory, which assesses the value of goods regarding its preference or election, nor its intrinsic added-value to fundamental components of well-being. In this sense, crack has more value than wine simply to the fact that the person prefers it. As it can be deduced, this implies dangerous assumptions: is an alcoholic the best judge to assess value to alcohol? For this reason, use-values, as we have seen, should have a controlling end: the good life, and "to pursue them beyond this point should be senseless" [2]. However, this implies to define what it means a good life, an issue solved for *Oikonomike*,¹ but completely put aside on the discussions of Economics.

According to Aristotle, there were *external* goods and *internal* goods, which were respectively divided between goods of the body and goods of the soul. Each one, in

¹ *Oikonomike* is actually the word and science used by the Greeks, from which the modern word and science "Economics" is derived. *Oikonomike* derives from the words "oikos," which means "household" and "nomos," which means the management of resources [2]. In this sense, *Oikonomike* means the art of "household management" and includes activities such as viticulture (an important activity held in the Greek society).

its own way, would help a person to “become happy” or, put differently, contribute to increase well-being. The external goods would grant material well-being (physical goods), the goods of the body would increase well-being of the physique (health and beauty), and the goods of the soul would bring internal well-being. Given this classification, he considered that the only desirable well-being by itself would be the last of the three, the well-being of the soul. It could not be obtained by the simple sum of the first two. Inherent to the reason of the human being, the well-being of the soul became known as *eudaimonia* [1].

Eudaimonia is the most valuable well-being and the one that belongs to one’s own soul: *eudaimonia* is that characteristic that is particular to human beings. Only activities in accordance with reason, to the peculiar activity of man and woman, is what would lead them to it [3]. In this sense, true well-being is enjoyed naturally, since people cannot control or manipulate it [4]. This complex construct introduced “refer to a state of mind at all, but to an admirable and desirable state of being. It is a matter of public appraisal, not private awareness” [2].

In turn, the Greek philosopher considered that the only way to achieve this state of inner well-being was through the virtuous practice of reason. In other words, choosing what is truly desirable, that is, what reason and not appetite presents as desirable [1], is how one achieves well-being. For this reason, the Aristotelian perspective to well-being is considered as subjective.

However, Aristotle differentiates the concept of ephemeral pleasure with that of eudemonia (a differentiation that has not been made in the subjective approach to well-being of the utilitarianism and preference satisfaction theory). While the ephemeral pleasures are satisfied with external goods and are motivated by appetite, the eudemonia is motivated by reason—as mentioned above, the activity peculiar to humans—and is not sought for the pleasure that its realization entails, but rather because it is desirable by itself [1]. In this regard, reference [2] adds that the good life is not simply one satisfied desire; it indicates the proper goal of desire. And desire is to be cultivated, directed to the truly desirable.

Well-being, therefore, is a stable, lasting mental quality, a person’s way of being, a set of virtues that accompanies them throughout their life [5]. And the virtues, for Aristotle, are those habits or human activities that humans perform in the different spheres of their lives. The virtuous human will have the desire to perform good and noble actions, those that respond to their desires and that will always be pleasant or “delightful” because the actions adjusted to virtue are delightful for the virtuous and delightful in themselves. In other words, well-being required the various excellences of the intellect, such as courage, moderation, generosity, and wisdom.

However, worth to mention, Aristotle pointed out that some “external goods” (thus material) were necessary to achieve the practice of the virtues inherent to human beings. These essential material goods, according to the Greek philosopher, were considered the universal needs, and according to various authors [2, 3, 6] they were land, housing, clothes, and furniture. In this sense, the “just and temperate person’ should accumulate those things in a minimum amount and then stop [2]. In other words, a person should get the external goods of a house, clothes, bed, and shoes and then dedicate their life to develop the internal and spiritual well-being. This is why the Aristotelian proposal is considered not only subjective but also objective. In this sense, it has the advantage of appreciating the inherent complexity of well-being in its external and internal components [1]. As pointed out by [7], there is non-interchangeability in the subjective and objective components of well-being. In this sense, every approach to measure well-being should consider both perspectives.

Finally, this objective approach to well-being implies a fundamental notion inside the thought of ancient Greeks: the limit. They believed that, as well there is a minimum level of external goods necessary to achieve the good life, there should also be an upper limit in this threshold. This limit to the material growth was necessary, and they believe, to not hinder the growth of other kinds, such as the spiritual one. This distinction between material and spiritual was very clear for ancient Greeks: they believed that the limits to economic/material growth should be the satisfaction of the universal/objective needs mentioned before. The excessive material growth without any limit was an obstacle for spiritual progress and will lead to a society of “pigs,” in the words of the philosopher Plato. Pursuing material growth, thus, will hinder the progress of reflection, enjoyment, and spiritual growth.² This consists of a powerful idea that is lacking in the field of Welfare Economics (see Section below), where “the more is the better.” This undermines not only the qualitative distinction between material and spiritual growth but also a just distribution of the material.

3. Utility: the definition of happiness in modern economics

Despite the multidimensionality of the Greek definition of well-being, mainstream normative economics (the field known as Welfare Economics) focuses on well-being as “preference satisfaction” [10], the informational moral base of which is utilitarianism. Revealed-preference theory identifies preferences with choices or hypothetical choices.³ For orthodox economists, “preferences” and “demand” are sufficient for the purposes of understanding human needs, and therefore there is no need for a deeper discussion in this regard [11]. Reference [12] argues that the notion of well-being⁴ for neoclassical welfare-economists cannot be measured directly, and therefore the option is to take what is chosen as evidence. This election explains the “quantity” of well-being people define for the goods, being expressed on how much “they are willing to pay.” In this sense, well-being is associated with market choices, serving as a justification to validate the market as a social institution.

² Lots of scholars have proposed some sort of nongrowing state for human society [8]. In “the limits of growth,” the Club of Rome called equilibrium to that state where population and capital were constant, and where a trade-off between the opposed forces of population and capital achieved a balanced outcome. It is important to point out that this “material” equilibrium of population and capital does not necessarily imply a stagnation of “everything.” In the words of John Stuart Mill, “it is scarcely necessary to remark that a stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the art of living as much more likelihood of its being improved” [9].

³ In the early utilitarian thinking, objects had the capacity to bring subjective pleasure or happiness. Later, this was modified to assess desire or fulfillment indicated by the choice of consumers, therefore expressed in market interactions. From this point is that the direct relation between well-being and income was made [11].

⁴ For the moment, we are using the words welfare and well-being as synonyms. But actually, the word welfare was developed by the corpus of Welfare Economics, making no distinction between the concepts. Nussbaum & Sen [13] had distinguished these categories. They related the notion of welfare to what people have or possess, whereas the notion of well-being refers to the conditions that are not only tangible but also intangible, since it includes the opportunities, freedoms, and aspirations that the person enjoys. For this reason, Stiglitz et al. [14] recommend recovering the use of the term well-being to detach from welfare and thus be able to use well-being as an appropriate category to measure social progress.

As mentioned before, the concept of utility relies on the normative theory of moral philosophy called Utilitarianism, and it was developed by Bentham in 1789. The term utility within the approach is considered synonymous with pleasure. Goods and actions, from this view, are not considered as useful or instruments with an end, but, on the contrary, they possess the intrinsic capacity of satisfying needs themselves and, in this way, produce well-being [15].

This intrinsic capacity was called utility. This term solved in a simple way the controversial relation between use-value to exchange-value. If use-value is just the utility it brings through consumption, and exchange-value is just the exchange of utilities, then the two terms are just different forms of a single general phenomenon of value. This ingenious application was allowed thank to the (again, mainstream) notion of individual self-interest:⁵ the idea of the social good as a collective achievement disappeared. It became a result of individuals pursuing their self-interest in the market. As authors in Ref. [2] argue, the discussion of human beings as what they “really are,” rather than as what they “ought to be,” was turned into an unassailable fortress of mathematics, logical x-y graphs, and analytics.

According to Sen [16], the requirements of utilitarianism can be divided into three components:

1. Consequentialism: all choices, whether they are acts, rules, or institutions, must be judged based on their consequences, on the results they generate;
2. Welfare: restricts the evaluation of situations to the utilities of the respective situations and does not pay attention to some things such as the recognition or violation of rights, obligations, and opportunities;
3. Order based on the sum: the utilities of the people are added to find an aggregate merit, disregarding how they are distributed.

The combination of 1, 2, and 3 is what is known as the classic formula that involves judging each choice based on the total sum of the utilities generated by that decision. And maximization occurs when “the greatest utility for the greatest number of people” is achieved, which attempted to be measured by the “hedonometer” proposal of Edgeworth. The teleological ethic defined by utilitarianism is characterized by understanding what is good regardless of what is just. In this sense, it is considered just as a subordinate concept, only as that which maximizes what is good.

Thus, this philosophical doctrine establishes utility as the barometer to evaluate actions according to whether they maximize pleasure and minimize pain, assigning crucial importance to hedonic experiences [4]. In this way, in contrast to the Aristotelian subjective conception of well-being associated with an art of living, reached by the practice of specific virtues values because there are desirable conditions of being, the utilitarian philosophy is associated with the predominance of sensations of satisfaction and pleasure. The implicit assumption is that individuals

⁵ Smith was less parsimonious than his followers about the notion of self-interest. He also developed the notion of “sympathy” in his first book, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. But as “economics took shape,” this is, as utilitarianism was unified with marginalism, the notion of maximization and its explanation through mathematics was done, and these complexities were ironed out. Also, as a way to consider the economy as an objective, measurable and mathematical science, the social, ethical, moral, and political sides were undermined.

(consumers) have a coherent and rational set of preferences that they reveal in their behavior. It does not matter, from this point of view, whether people are altruists, egoists, hedonists, masochists, or anything else: all that matters is that they have certain preferences and act according to them [2].

This view understands well-being in only one of its dimensions, namely the material. Under this conception, at the macroeconomic level, the higher the Gross Domestic Product (GDP),⁶ the greater the flow of goods and services, the greater the economic activity, which translates into greater well-being. In this sense and as its definition stresses, the GDP focuses on only one dimension of the complex concept of well-being, i.e. its monetary component, undermining its multidimensional characteristic [19].

Reference [19] provides a summary of critics to the principles in which orthodox welfare economics rely on. First, the idea that individuals are the best judges of “the correctness” of their preferences or wants—what in [11] is called “the subjective conception of interests”—is not true because people face imperfect information. The range of the things we have access to are constrained by the productive sphere and by the context. In the current state of affairs, it has been augmented by digital and surveillance capitalism that constraints and catalogs our everyday choices. In this regard, Kahneman [20] has demonstrated multiple ways in which people act and decide irrationally, particularly when they face uncertainty

Second, if preferences, tastes, and values are shaped by institutions—such as markets—where individuals take part, then preferences cannot be exogenous to peoples’ beliefs and actions, who are part of these institutions. In other words, “what is being evaluated defines the criterion by which it is being evaluated” [21]. The principle of private sovereignty [11], this is, that what is to be produced, how it is to be produced, and how it is to be distributed is determined by the private consumption and work preferences of individuals but falls off to consider the individual’s subjective influence on these dynamics. There is no objective standpoint from which to evaluate these preferences, as they constitute outcomes from complex interactions between institutions and the processes of exchanges. How values, power, beliefs, and thus choices are influenced by social institutions or even by the economic exchange itself is not part of the theory.

Third, the imaginary construct of a homo economicus only incentivized by its own self-interest undermines completely the notion of the other. As reference [10] emphasizes, “people are sometimes altruistic and all too often malevolent. People sometimes sacrifice their own well-being to benefit others or to do harm to those they hate.” In other words, behavior can also be motivated by concern for others. Neoclassical economics assumes that individuals are autonomous. Furthermore, it assumes that each person is faced with a preexisting “set of choices” that can be hierarchically (and rationally) arranged by them. This objectivity of choices relies on the concept of the rational economic man. As regards this, Max Neef [22] argues that the modern dominant styles of development have tremendous obstacles in making personal development compatible with social development. Both the dynamics of the exercise of power and the effects of exclusionary ideologies tend to dissolve people

⁶ GDP is “is the total monetary or market value of all the final goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period,” and it was adopted as the main measure of a country’s economy since the Kuznets presented it in the Bretton Woods conference in 1944. It is worth noting that Kuznets himself warned that the welfare of a nation can hardly be deduced from the measurement of the GDP [17, 18].

into mass archetypes, or to sacrifice the masses for archetypes of “an individual.” The current models, therefore, postpone social development in the name of consumer sovereignty, in circumstances that reduce a person to the mere category of consumer. This can only put limits to personal development.

Fourth, the neoclassical theory of consumption explains that needs, preferences, and desires are unlimited.⁷ In this regard, reference [2] argued that this definition on the orthodox corpus of economics had condemned us to scarcity, and not because of a lack of resources, but because of the extravagance of our appetites. It is paradoxical that while the main domain of economics is the study of efficient means to ends, the economist has nothing to say about those ends [2]. There are no limits to satisfaction nor utility, as every consumption of more and different goods only increases it: a larger bundle of goods and services is always preferable to a smaller one. However, are the production and consumption of more guns preferable? Unlike ancient Greeks, orthodox economics presupposes that needs are an open-ended and elastic concept.

Fifth, for mainstream economic analysis, everything is a preference. Both, the wish of a little baby for water and the wish of a homeless person for a secure place for sleeping. As Housman [10] points out, every action is considered a preference; and every preference is measured in the same way, regarding their willingness to pay.

Finally, reference [19] highlights that preference satisfaction theory does not take into account the preferences of future generations. Its intricate nature cannot be revealed through the choices and behavior of present generations, and, as pointed out by ecologists, they are completely undermined.

The conclusion of [19] is that preference satisfaction theory cannot provide a logical, neither ethical nor practical conception and measurement of human well-being—especially, on an inter-generational scale. But, as [10] indicates, accepting the connection between preferences and well-being have permitted economists to avoid offering a real and deep philosophical theory of well-being. Or, in the words of Doyal & Gough, while numerous criticisms have been made to the principles of satisfaction theory over the last century, “they still form the normative basis for the inattention paid to the concept of need by neoclassical economics” [11]. For all the mentioned reasons, we consider that this approach is not sustainable, and our science should be focusing on the creation of new tools to analyze the complex human well-being.

Furthermore, this set of limitations can lead to decisions that exacerbate—and in a way justify—inequality and deepen inequality [24]. Therefore, the public information that can be obtained based on the utilitarian metric can thus generate a distortion in the design and elaboration of public policies [1]. In this sense, the organization of the society relies on the private wants of individuals (who are only considered as consumers), and, as Skidelsky & Skidelsky [2] state, the good life is only “a marginal concern, an affair of eccentrics and enthusiasts.” The construct of well-being therefore is reduced to a measurable unconditional set of goods. The sources of well-being, its components, and its complex multidimensionality are completely disregarded: “all that matter is whether you have more or less stuff.”

For this reason, and in agreement with [22], we believe that to the economic logic—heir to the instrumental reason that permeates modern culture—it is necessary to oppose an ethic of well-being. The fetishism of numbers must be opposed with the notion of human development. Vertical management by the State and the exploitation

⁷ The most widespread definition of the Economy in study plans of universities is “a science that allocates limited resources to unlimited needs” [23]. This definition is not questioned, and we will be argued that a deeper study of needs and its supposed unlimitidness is necessary.

of some groups by others must be opposed to the gestation of social wills that aspire to participation, autonomy, and a more equitable use of available resources.

4. Recent proposals of innovative conceptualization of happiness

Despite the dominance of the utilitarian philosophy and its widespread study through Economic study plans around the globe, there has been a series of alternative proposals to expand the notion of well-being, as we will see in the next sections.

However, this direct relationship and the reduction of well-being to a mere monetary dimension has been questioned by scholars and a series of alternative contributions began to proliferate since the 1970s. In this chapter, we will summarize the different contributions and proposals that contribute to its operationalization (a, b) and widen its conceptualization (c, d), as to know:

- a. The controversial relationship between income and happiness as the result of Easterlin's paradox [25], who presented empirical evidence that refutes the direct relationship between income level and happiness, opening up a literature discussion that is still ongoing.
- b. A revision of a set of multidimensional indexes of well-being, as to know: the Human Development Index (HDI), which boosted a series of proposals of indexes of well-being that we will shortly describe, as to know: the Social Progress Index (SPI), the Prosperity Index (PI), Happy Planet Index (HPI), the World Happiness Report (WHR), the Integral Human Development Index (HDIi), and the Gross National Happiness (GNH).
- c. Amartya Sen's [26] capabilities approach, which seeks to evaluate well-being and its attainment from a broader consequentialism
- d. The cosmovision of the indigenous traditions of Buen Vivir as "retro-progressive utopias" that connects the values of the communities to the currents of contemporary critical thoughts, widen the discussion of well-being not only as a construct but as a proposal of alternative development.

4.1 The relationship between income and well-being: Easterlin Paradox

There has been a vast literature studying the relationship between income and subjective well-being since the publication of the work of Easterlin [25] from where the notion of Easterlin Paradox was created [27–33]. This author arrived at the empirical conclusion that the increase in a country's income does not necessarily entail an increase in the level of subjective well-being of its inhabitants. His aim was to understand whether there is sufficient empirical evidence to consider that the increase in GDP per capita is an indicator of the improvement in people's well-being, understood in terms of happiness [25]. To verify this, the author collected data for 19 countries and reached the following three conclusions, summarized as follows:

1. Within a given country and at a given time, the correlation between income level and happiness exists and is strong;

2. When comparing countries, it does not seem so clear that rich ones report higher levels of well-being than poorer ones, and, within the rich countries, from a certain level of income, successive increases in income do not entail substantial increases of happiness. This situation can be seen in countries such as Indonesia, Mexico, or Costa Rica, in which individuals report similar and high levels of satisfaction, despite not being considered among the richest countries in terms of income—see [25]. In other words, it suggests that although the economic factor is necessary, it is not sufficient, given that once a certain threshold of hypothetical wealth is crossed, the relationship between it and the level of happiness becomes complex and less harmonious;
3. While the income of the US population has grown significantly over a period of time (between 1946 and 1970), the level of reported happiness has not shown a consistent trend of change. In this way, he observes that while the GDP per capita of this country grew systematically and significantly during this period, the level average happiness declared of its inhabitants did not show a homogeneous trend of change, given that in some periods a decreasing tendency while in some other increasing ones was observed.

Since its publication, a series of studies have emerged presenting evidence for or against the paradox. Reference [34] analyzes these investigations and highlights that some authors find a positive and robust relationship between the level of subjective well-being and the product of the countries, proclaiming themselves against the paradox. However, other authors—including Easterlin, McVey, Switek, Sawangfa—argue that this relationship is only robust when comparing countries cross-sectionally, given that the analysis of time evolution yields an opposite result [34].

On the other hand, some researchers defend the existence of the link between income and well-being in those countries whose basic needs have not been met, but alleging that beyond a certain income threshold—satiation point—, this relationship becomes insignificant. For example, Diener and Seligman [35] gathered empirical evidence on countries with average income above 10,000 dollars in annual PPP and tested the correlation between satisfaction with life and GDP. They find that the correlation is insignificant in most of these countries, thus confirming the paradox.

Layard [36, 37] states that income provides well-being in countries with low levels of development, but once the threshold is reached—around USD 10,000 PPP—, the average income level in a country has little or no effect on well-being average subjective. In this way, from certain levels of income, the successive increases in it do not entail substantial increases in the levels of happiness.

There are also Latin-American studies contributing to this discussion. For example, see [38], where authors have proven that life satisfaction that is related to the relational domains (satisfaction with the couple, satisfaction with children, satisfaction with friends, and satisfaction with family) reports greater levels than the income satisfaction. They also point out that health satisfaction and the satisfaction of free time are also important for these societies.

Hence, the Easterlin paradox that bears his name calls into question the relationship that is assumed to be direct between income and happiness for a given country. In addition, it shows that economic growth, operationalized through GDP, is a partial and incomplete indicator of true social welfare. If the increase in income does not guarantee happiness, then there are important policy implications. Reference [6] suggests that the State should promote the factors that positively influence happiness

levels, trying to reduce or eliminate those that negatively influence them. Which are the drivers that boost human well-being is one of the questions this thesis wants to contribute.

4.2 The revision of the multidimensional indexes of well-being

The movement of social indicators was boosted by the creation of the concept of the Human Development Index (HDI) —prepared by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), following Sen's capabilities approach—that it is internationally recognized. The HDI is the most used indicator to make comparisons of international rankings [6]. It arose from an initiative between Mahbuh ul Haq and Amartya Sen and has been calculated since 1990 by the United Nations Development Program [39].

The human development paradigm considers the increase in the range of options, choices, and opportunities among which human beings can choose. Its purpose is the expansion of the range of opportunities that human beings have, understanding as fundamental the following ones: being able to enjoy a healthy and lasting existence, access to knowledge, have sufficient material resources, and have the opportunity to participate in community life [40]. It incorporates three components that contain a total of four indicators: (i) having a long and healthy life—measured life expectancy at birth; (ii) acquiring knowledge—measured by average years of schooling and expected years of schooling; and (iii) enjoying a decent standard of living—measured GDP per capita [41]. Regarding the third component, as we express before, there exist several limitations of this direct relationship. The standardization method used by the HDI is the Linear Scaling Technique (LST), developed in [42]. For the weighting, the method of equi-proportionality is used, that is, equal weight is given to the three dimensions. This decision is based on the normative assumption of equality in the dimensions, that is, it considers that all human beings value the three dimensions equally.

It is a merely objective index, which ignores the categories that the subjects themselves make about their situation and, therefore, only offers a partial view of well-being. In this sense, even though this has constituted an advance, the index falls to incorporate the subjective dimension of well-being that, as we will argue, it is fundamental when building the concept of well-being [42, 43]. Manfredi & Actis Di Pasquale [7] had incorporated subjective indicators to the components of income, health, and education of the IDH, developing an index called “Integral HDI” (HDIi) and showing there is non-interchangeability of these dimensions, pointing out the necessity to incorporate the subjective measures and therefore criticizing the use of HDI as a replacement of GDP. In fact, and not by surprise, the ranking of HDI does not present big differences to the ranking provided by the GDP.

However, the importance of the HDI cannot be understated: it has boosted the creation of multiple proposals of multidimensional indicators across the globe that, even their limitations, has broadened the spectrum to study the construct. Since then, it has been accepted that well-being is composed of more than one component, the monetary. On the one hand, the HDI proposes a multicomponent but objective perspective to measure well-being, whereas, on the other hand, indicators just as Life Satisfaction measures only the subjective part. However, there have been developed multidimensional and multi component indexes across the globe. Among them the different proposals of indexes we can mention: Social Progress Index (SPI), Prosperity Index (PI), World Happiness Report (WHR), Happy Planet Index (HPI), and the Integral Human Development Index (IDHi).

A deep study of each of the indexes is not going to be provided in this thesis because it is not the aim of it. A table summarizing the different components (and the specification if they take them in their subjective or objective perspective) and indicator each one uses is provided here in order to show the acceptance on the use of both dimensions and multiple components (**Table 1**).

The HDI is the only indicator that only uses an objective perspective. The other proposals use a bidimensional perspective, showing the general acceptance of their non-interchangeability. However, they do not combine objective and subjective indicators for all the components they embed, except from the Integral Human Development Index (HDIi). The decision to include a brief summary of these indexes (and not include new ones, as these proposals are still proliferating) is to point out just the conclusion that comes out after their analysis:⁸ These proposals come mainly from developed nations, in which the values, traditions, culture, socioeconomic, and geographic realities are not taken into account. In [6], the rankings—the outcomes of each one of these indicators—for the Latin-American countries differ substantially, as the correlations of Tau B Kendall and Rho Spearman resulted in very low coefficients. This dispersion of results raises doubts about the reliability of these rankings: is their use appropriate? Which indicator is better? Why do they ponder the components in this way? Does a researcher in England understand “business opportunities” in the same manner as in Bolivia? Moreover, the notion of social ties, or importance of the family, or personal rights, do they make the same sense for Latin American countries? Most of the proposals came from international institutions located in the Global North, where the fundamental components of well-being might be different, as they depend on the values and culture of each society. The conclusion of [6], stressed in [7], is what we want to stress in this subsection: the importance of building well-being policies (rather than indicators) regionally, locally. The idea of creating an homogenous universal measure of well-being in order to compare (and I may ask, compare for what?) would lead us to commit the same mistake—the blindly and restlessly pursuing of the increment of an indicator that we believe can be used as a proxy of well-being. This notion implies that policy makers should focus on regional variables in order to create their own well-being policies and measurements.

4.2.1 A note on the notion of Gross National Happiness (GNH): Bhutan

An index that has embedded the need for regional well-being is the so-called Gross National Happiness (GNH) of Bhutan. This concept was proposed by Jigme Singye Wangchuck, King of Bhutan, in 1974, as opposed to the Gross National Product. It measures quality of life in more holistic and psychological terms than GDP [45] and serves to remind the values lost in the modern world, questioning the purpose and validity of the development of the measurement process, based solely on economic growth. The GNH offers a perspective from nine dimensions, as to know: Subjective well-being, Use of time, Community vitality, Cultural diversity, Ecology, Resilience and pollution, Health, Education, Good governance and Quality of life, involving a total of 33 indicators.

In each of its components, it combines both objective and subjective indicators. It is an index made by and for Bhutanese citizens. It constitutes the first national initiative to define, measure, and monitor the social well-being of a country considering the components according to its own conception, taking into account its values,

⁸ A detailed review of each indicator, its conceptualization, and operationalization can be found in [6, 44].

Indexes	IDH		SPI		PI		WHR		HPI		IDHi	
	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj
Health	1		5		8		1		1		1	
Education	2		4		10	2					2	1
Income	1				9	4	1				1	1
Social capital					1	9	1					
Community							1					
Subjective well-being								3			1	
Environment			3		8	1			1			
Governance					6	7	1					
Housing			3									
Security			4		7	4						
Access to basic knowledge			4									
Access to information			3									
Freedom			2		7	5						
Temperance and respect												
Business opportunities					7	5						
Nutrition and health assistance			6									
Water and sanitation			3									
Personal rights			2	3								
Total of components	3		3 (12)		9	9	9	9	3		3	3
Objective indicators	4		39		63	63	6	6	2		4	4

Indexes	IDH		SPI		PI		WHR		HPI		IDHi	
	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj	Obj	Subj
Dimension												
Subjective indicators	0		14		41		3		1		3	
Total indicators	4		53		106		9		3		7	

*IDHi: Índice de Desarrollo Humano or Human Development Index (IDH, HDI); *SPI: Social Progress Index, <https://www.socialprogress.org/>; *PI: Prosperity Index, <https://www.prosperity.com/>; *WHR: World Happiness Report, <https://worldhappiness.report/>; *Happy Planet Index, <https://happyplanetindex.org/>; *IDHi: Índice de Desarrollo Humano Integral or Integral Human Development index (IDHi, HDIi), <http://uhu.es/publicaciones/ojs/index.php/REM/article/view/4648>.
 Source: own elaboration.

Table 1.
 Multidimensional indexes of well-being and its components.

traditions, and culture. In other words, the composition of the index takes into account the reality of the country together with the perceptions and opinions of civil society. And although in Bhutan the well-being of the society is understood as spiritual and not material development, due to its explicitly Buddhist values, it consists of a paradigm shift regarding the measurement of well-being and a proposal to be taken into account.

Klikberg [46], in his report on Bhutan, asserts that the GNH serves to remind us of the priorities that we have forgotten in the modern world, questioning the notion of happiness and validity in regard to how we measure our progress. He argues that it has come the time to put an end to the misleading calculations of human progress based on economic growth. For progress to be valid, it must have its axis in the citizens, equitably distributed among its inhabitants, and must be socially.

4.3 Sen's capability approach

Sen's capabilities approach marks a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of well-being [47]. The theory of functions and capabilities is presented as an alternative to the utilitarian metric. It is based on the evaluation of well-being and obtaining freedom from a broader point of view of the individual, no longer restricted to their level of income or the goods or resources that they possess or have access to but, rather, what they can do with what they have, that is, what they manage to do or be. Sen departs from a broader and pluralist consequentialism than utilitarianism, whereby he recognizes that freedom and rights are intrinsically important in people's lives [48].

The approach considers that a person's life is a variety of "beings and doings" whose constituent elements are what he calls *functionings*. A functioning is an achievement of a person: something that she/he has managed to do or be, and they are integral parts of his state [49]. On the other hand, and linked to this concept, the approach also considers the effective possibility that the person has to perform (or not) the different types of functioning. These are the *capabilities*, which represent the alternative combinations of *functionings* that a person can do or be while living [50].

The *functionings* that can be achieved represent the well-being of a person, and the ability to achieve the *functionings* constitute the positive freedom of that person, that is, their real opportunities to obtain well-being and lead a valuable life, giving rise to self-determination [49]. The notion of *functionings* offers an overview of what the life of the person is like, which is necessary for them, and this is the right assessment for judging their freedom and their well-being [51].

Sen has not managed to enunciate in any of his works a complete list of capabilities or *functionings*,⁹ although he distinguishes, in general terms, between elementary and complex *functionings*. The former includes avoiding morbidity and mortality, being adequately nourished, and having mobility. The second ones involve the achievement of self-respect, achievement of self-dignity, social integration, and the possibility to appear in public without shyness and be happy [52]. That is, while the elementals are objective conditions of well-being, the complexes include both objective and subjective aspects.

⁹ Marta Nussbaum has advanced a list of 10 central human capabilities, including bodily health and integrity, imagination, thought, practical reason, affiliation, and play. Such capabilities, she and Sen argue, define the space within which quality of life should be assessed [2].

Sen distinguishes between different types of evaluative spaces that allow him to value economically and socially a wide variety of information categories: goods, characteristics of goods, *functionings* and *capabilities*. To understand them, we will expose the case of riding a bicycle as an example, since it is the most used by Sen [49, 52, 53].

A bicycle, first of all, is a good that has certain properties. However, suppose it only has one: function as a means of transportation (a). Secondly, the effects caused by using the bicycle are varied, in the sense that it can be used for fun, for sport, or because it is the only alternative to get around although a car would be preferred, etc. (b). Thirdly, the bicycle as a good requires that the person that the owner is in physical conditions to be able to ride it, that she/he knows how to ride it and that she/he does not have any disease that does not allow her/him to use it (c).

In this sense, the question is: which of these three aspects (a, b, or c) is the most appropriate to represent the contribution of a bicycle to the well-being of a person? The first aspect (a) fails to assess well-being precisely because the bicycle is simply an object, and the mere possession of an external good is not the same as being able to use and enjoy it. In other words, it is important to distinguish between the good in itself—bicycle—, the activity that it allows—riding a bicycle—and the mental state or satisfaction that entails. On the other hand, if well-being were evaluated taking into account the second aspect (b), only the usefulness of the bike would be evaluated. This pleasure is variable and influenced by individual tastes, fashions, traditions, and culture; therefore, it is not an adequate type of information to capture well-being.

Finally, to capture the real well-being is pertinent to evaluate the activity that the bicycle allows; that is, riding a bike. It is the last aspect (c) that, in fact, demands attention according to this approach. The most appropriate path then is to determine what the person does with the good she/he owns, and in general what she/he manages to do with all the goods that are under her/his control. And this, that is the *functioning*, will vary depending on the person being evaluated, either if it is a child, an elderly person, a sick person, an athlete, or a paralytic [51].

Therefore, *capabilities* are the notion that allows two people to be compared to find out which one has a greater range of opportunities that will allow them to access a higher level of well-being. However, as *capabilities* are potentialities, it is not feasible to measure them or carry out a direct evaluation of them. On the contrary, the *functionings*, as reflected by the achievements, are measurable since they are a constitutive part of the person. In short, the evaluation through the set of capabilities only remains in the theoretical model, while in practice it is the functions achieved that allow measuring well-being (Urquijo Angarita, 2007).

In other words, to assess individual well-being, Sen considers that the resources possessed by the person do not provide enough information since their effective use varies according to personal circumstances, such as age, health, class, education, social capital, and among others. For example, an elderly person will surely need more resources than a young person so that both are equally capable of being healthy; a person with basic knowledge about health and hygiene will be more capable of being healthy, with the same resources, than someone who lacks such knowledge [51]. However, this does not imply that in practice the level of income and access to some basic or essential goods are totally ignored. Even Sen himself in [16] recognizes that if some corrections are made to the monetary variable to account for differences in people's circumstances, income level can be a useful complementary tool in well-being assessments. In this sense, Sen's vision coincides with that of Aristotle, since they consider that having access to certain goods is essential to achieve well-being, although it is not sufficient.

In short, the Senian conception of well-being has the advantage of focusing not only on what people do but also on what they can do. In this way, it is a notion that covers both the subjective and objective aspects, since in order to do things, the person needs, on the one hand, access to certain goods. On the other hand, by doing and acting, the person enjoys an inner satisfaction by fulfilling the desires or aspirations that motivated that action. In addition, by holding that the level of well-being depends on the available set of *capacities* to function, it is closely related to the ethical notion of the good life, unlike what happens in the standard economic theories of development and well-being [1]. The notion of what a person can do with what they have is an important advancement in the study of well-being, because it connects the categories in which this is realized: the being, the having, and the doing, which connects this theory with the one developed in [22].

4.4 Buen Vivir

Buen Vivir (in English, loosely translates as “good living” or “well living”) has emerged as a political concept in Latin America during the 2000s, but its principles are far older [54], as they belong to the cosmovision of the indigenous communities of South America. One of the main precursors of the movement in Ecuador, Alberto Acosta, well-being cannot be reduced to the occidental notion and needs to be based open up, relying on indigenous cosmologies and interpretations.

Moreover, and as in [55–58], we believe that this approach offers an alternative in the mode of development, rather than only a discussion on how to measure well-being. Ziai [54] when studying post-development alternatives have compared Buen Vivir, Ubuntu,¹⁰ and Degrowth proposals, concluding that Buen Vivir is the only initiative that constitutes a real post-development strategy. In general, it can be said that both Buen Vivir and Ubuntu constitute “*retro-progressive utopias*” that connect the values of the old communities to the currents of contemporary critical thoughts, looking toward emancipatory, socio-ecologically, and sustainable futures.

The notion of Buen Vivir implies a bigger change in the way we run our economies, and it fulfills the lacking connection between well-being and development, also covered by the Chilean Max Neef in [22]. As reference [59] points out, Buen Vivir must be understood as “concept in construction that is taking place in a wide variety of contexts and that is characterized precisely because of its plurality.” The term must be contextualized in its environment understanding the Andine culture and the peasant-indigenous-native cosmovision.¹¹

An important distinctive characteristic about these approaches needs to be made. Nowadays, as we have seen, multiple proposals and initiatives are emerging across the globe to challenge the hegemonic power asking to the “ancestral culture” (the “vernacular culture”) of the world of our ancestors to recreate and redefine what it means to “live well” in our century. As it is explained in [60], the initiatives in the North

¹⁰ Ubuntu is a philosophical concept widely known in sub-Saharan Africa which derives from the Xhosa phrase “Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu,” which means “A person is a person through other persons” [54].

¹¹ A cosmovision is the “the way of seeing Oneself, Feeling, perceiving and Projecting The World that varies in culture” [58].

of “Slow movement”¹² and “Transition”¹³ has been popularized and it’s not a new concept. However, Buen Vivir is present on the collective memory of the pleasant-indigenous-native of the Global South for sicles. What is new is that from this perspective a new platform for the political economy has opened [56]. Acknowledged this stating that while in Ecuador and Bolivia it is already a political and constitutional discussion, in countries like Argentina, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico its importance in the political discourse is increasing. As it is pointed out in [61], everyday there are more and more voices being raised in the world that are in some way in tune with this indigenous vision [61].

Ecuador and Bolivia recognize constitutionally, for the first time, the principles of Buen Vivir in Ecuador (*sumak kawsay* in Kichwa) and Vivir Bien in Bolivia (*suma qamaña* in Aymara) [62]. Both seek to return to the ancestral principles of their indigenous cultures, which can be generally summarized as the notion of living in harmony with nature. The visions of Buen Vivir seek a greater harmony of the human being in three dimensions: with her/himself, with their congeners/comrades, and with nature. In this sense, Buen Vivir involves the achieving of internal harmony (with one self), harmony with the community and between communities (with the other), and harmony with nature (with pachamama).

Internal harmony implies that people can develop their full human potential, and that everything they can “be” (ser and estar, explained later on) and “do”, and they do so in a framework of freedom. It is related to the extended reproduction of life and human rights; it requires having—especially— good physical and mental health. It considers the supremacy of work over capital and contemplates that the economy must be at the service of the people. It also includes the balance in the allocation of time between paid work, unpaid work, and leisure. This notion of time from these approaches is fundamental for this thesis. As it is pointed out in [63], modern capitalism, in its way, has ensured that the unavoidable leisure time is associated with unemployment, so it causes misery instead of being a universal source of happiness.

Harmony with the community and between communities means that people live together as equals, and that they have the will to live together well. It is related to strengthening social relationships, interactions and cooperative ties, relationships of solidarity, reciprocity, fraternity, sorority, and respecting diversity. It covers inclusion, cohesion, social capital, participation, and interculturality. It requires promoting equality and reducing disparities. In addition, it understands the economic system

¹² “The Slow Movement” is a term that describes a wide range of diverse projects, initiatives, and efforts taking place around the world that seek to reconnect human beings in more meaningful and sustainable relationships with other human beings, with the natural world and its specific locale, and with themselves. The Slow Movement arose as an effort to counter the fast-paced, commodity-focused, unbalanced, and impersonal nature of much of modern human culture” (Adapted from http://www.create-the-good-life.com/slow_movement.html)

¹³ “The Transition Movement” is made up of vibrant, grassroots community initiatives that seek to build community resilience in the face of challenges such as peak oil, climate change, and economic crisis. Transition Initiatives differentiate themselves from other groups and “environmental “of sustainability, seeking to mitigate these converging global crises by engaging their communities in harvesting citizen-led education, action, and multi-stakeholder planning to increase local self-reliance and resilience.” (Taken from <http://transitionus.org/transition-town-movement>)

as social and solidarity.¹⁴ Harmony with nature implies that people, companies, and society respect the natural environment, which is the source of the reproduction of life. It understands the economy as a subsystem of a larger system called the biosphere and that environmental conditions directly or indirectly affect people's lives, just as human activities affect the environment. It is related to the rights of nature, intergenerational justice, and environmental sustainability.

Vivir Bien in Ecuador emphasizes the protection of the environment and the display of solidarity and is built on the historical experience of indigenous communities that have lived in harmony with nature [64]. Buen Vivir in Bolivia, on the other hand, recognizes the *ethos* of the indigenous communities including and promoting the following principles: prioritize life, respect differences, live in complementarity, reach consensus between agreements, balance and harmony with nature, defend the identity, accept the differences, prioritize cosmic rights, know how to eat, know how to drink, know how to dance, know how to work, know how to communicate, come back to the *abya laya*, protect the seeds, respect women, and "live well, not better" [60].

From the vast literature analyzing the cosmovision of Buen Vivir, we will explain the five basic principles of the theory that are fundamental for the development of this thesis. They are:

1. **El todo es la Pacha (Everything is Mother Nature¹⁵)**. This principle involves two facts. First, there is no separation between human and nature. Second, that time is cyclic and not linear.
2. **Multipolarity**. Our *being* stands in a constant contradiction between the "ser" and "estar." Buen Vivir is not about not 'to be' (ser), but to learn how to be (estar), and this can be achieved by fostering a harmonic relationship with our living surroundings, breaking the dichotomy that separates us from nature and coming back to our senses to recover our animal side. The discussion between "ser" and "estar" is fundamental for our thesis, but complex to expand in English. The stress on the notion of "ser" answers to the question "*who* am I?" which inevitably implies the use of categories through (usually dichotomic, closed, and outdated) labels, such as: "I am a woman, I am Argentinian, I am an economist," as this is a process that our mind (and its predefined categories) does. On the contrary, the "estar" answers the question "*how* am I?" and, instead of using "mind" mechanisms to answer, uses the instincts and senses. In other words, instead of using mental artifacts to answer or to realize the being, one must "come back to the body," feel her/himself and in that present moment realize

¹⁴ Expressed by Acosta (2010), the basic value of the economy, under a Buen Vivir regime, is solidarity. A different economy is sought, one based on the social and solidarity links, different from that is characterized by supposedly free competition, which encourages economic cannibalism among human beings and which fuels financial speculation. Based on this constitutional definition, the aim is to build relations of production, exchange, and cooperation that foster efficiency and quality, based on solidarity.

¹⁵ Although the term "Pachamama" is generally translated to Mother Earth (in Spanish) or Mother Nature (in English), the term derives from two Aymara words: "pacha" and "mama." The word "pacha" in Aymara refers to "the totality of the being." The word "mama" in Aymara refers to "the mother." "Pachamama, therefore, it is the telluric mother of the world and being" ([58], p. 21).

her/his being.¹⁶ Using the senses will allow us to come back to a wider notion of the being, understanding the immaterial nonrational and spiritual part of the construct, which is crucial for this thesis.¹⁷

3. **Equilibrium as a dynamic place in between to resolve the contradictory parts.** The first contradiction we need to solve is the relationship between nature and humans. They believe that the equilibrium is a dynamic state (disruptive as in mainstream Economics we consider equilibrium as static), a place in between that can connect both things without prioritizing one upon the other one. They consider that there is no eternal equilibrium, but a continuation of dynamic equilibrium in an infinite circular time. Even if abstract, this is an important notion about how to overcome contradictions. Is not the structure nor the superstructure that will boost the change, but both [13]. It is not patriarchy nor matriarchy the solution, but both. Accepting that the equilibrium can be reached in an infinite dynamic is a philosophical aspect of Buen Vivir and challenges our reductionist way of thinking inside Economics.¹⁸
4. **Complementarity.** They strongly believe in cooperation. The only possible way to reach equilibrium is through complementarity and never competition. They believe in the complementarity of the opposites, as a way to solve dichotomous contradictions.
5. **De-colonization:** This approach implies a counter-hegemonic alternative, the dismantling of the political, economic, social, cultural, and mental systems that do not allow us to see the whole.

Buen Vivir presupposes that there is free time for both contemplation and emancipation, and it is needed for the freedoms, opportunities, and capabilities of people to increase.

Far from an economy overdetermined by mercantile relations, Buen Vivir aims to build dynamic and constructive relations between the market, society, and the State. It seeks to build a society with a diversity of different types of markets, so as not to have a market society, that is, a commodified society.

In sum, Buen Vivir encompasses a set of ideas that are being forged as a reaction and alternative to conventional concepts of development. Under the concept, there are various reflections that, with great intensity, explore new creative perspectives both in the plane of ideas as in practices. Reference [57] argues that there are a lot of specific practical strategies that are being held, such as the introduction of

¹⁶ Does your back hurt right now because of the way you are sitting? If you just realized this, in this moment you are experiencing through the “estar” of your being. Are you hungry? Do you listen with attention? Do you hear your inner (body) sounds? Are you conscious of your own breathing?

¹⁷ It is also interesting noticing the different way in which languages have named well-being: whereas in Spanish it is bien-estar, stressing the notion of the estar, in Italian, another language who differentiates the verb to be, uses the term ben-essere, stressing the notion of the ser/essere.

¹⁸ The best explanation of this notion of “dynamic equilibrium” between two supposedly dichotomic and contradictory parts was provided by Jung (1933) in his description of the card “The World”: a dancer in pause, a subtle and little space in between the movement and the quiet. The answer to the question: How can we distinguish the dancer from the dance if in physics we were taught that we are a dance of particles? embeds this state of in-betweenness.

environmental accounting, tax reforms, the dematerialization of economies, and alternative integration in regions in South America.

4.4.1 *Four existential categories of well-being: doing, having, being... & being?*

In the studies of well-being exists—either explicitly or implicitly—the recognition of four existential categories in which the well-being is realized. These categories have been used in the frameworks of human needs and well-being explicitly [22, 65] and implicitly [11, 66]. The four categories and their differences are emphasized by the Buen Vivir scholars. In English, however, the categories are reduced to three, as the verb *to be* has no distinction as in other languages. For instance, distinct verbs, such as “ser” and “estar” (in Spanish), or “essere” and “stare” (in Italian) are translated as “to be” in English. The four categories, thus, are: “ser” (to be), “estar” (to be), “hacer” (to do), “tener” (to have).

Reference [67] has provided arguments for the differentiation inside the verb *to be* (not from a Buen Vivir perspective, but from a psychological perspective), arguing that while “estar” is a temporal state, “ser” is immutable and infinite and therefore more accurate to be related with happiness. However, the perspective of Buen Vivir, as mentioned before, stresses that the exercise of humans to live a complete life is to “stay” (*permanecer*) in a constant present moment, in a state of permanent awareness that we are here, in between the infinite dynamics of our world, and through this practice, realize our whole being. This is why, for example, the word *Ñasa* in *jñatjo*¹⁹ language (one of the cosmovision of Buen Vivir) means “look up to the sky” and consists on a fundamental activity for these societies, as devoting time of the day just to look at the sky allows us to “stay” (*permanecer* in Spanish) and “estar” (being), living the present moment [68]. For this approach, the notion of being is reached through the deepest connection of oneself with the *Pachamama*—mother earth or Gaia [61, 66, 69, 70]. The differential approach to welfare made in [70] also associates the “being” to the possibility to live in harmony with nature. In this sense, both approaches would integrate the relationship with nature in the core of the concept of “being.” In this line, we will argue then that the notion of “estar” is not related to the hedonist pleasure defined before, as argued in [67], but it is a challenge to feel the senses in order to increase our immaterial well-being. Thus, the notion of “ser”—still fundamental for the well-being, we are not undermining, but differentiating—, it is more “contaminated” by modernity and therefore its connection with the immaterial is not as straightforward as it is with “estar.” Both “ser” and “estar,” however, correspond to the notion of being. Their common characteristic is that the needs of the being are realized by internal incentives and stimulus, and not external. Unlike the having and the doing, which imply the existence of an external source, the being does not.

¹⁹ The language *Jñatjo* belongs to the community *Jñatjo*, located in San Agustín Mextepec, Municipality of San Felipe de Progress, Mexico. The language *jñatjo*—also known as *mazahua*—is an indigenous language whose etymological root is derived by the—deer—and the suffix *hua*—owner or the one who possesses—and in conjunction, “deer people.”

5. Conclusion

Within the existing utilitarian framework, “there can be no overconsumption of goods of any kind, since by definition a good is simply something a consumer wants to buy” (see [2]) because it gives them well-being: the more, the better. On a macro-level, this philosophy has been translated that more GDP brings more well-being, happiness, or welfare. This has led us to the current state we are in now: nation states with more unequal societies, that only pursue the paradigm of growth, with not attention to its distribution, and leading to excessive overconsumption patterns that are hurting our planet and putting in risk the lives of future generation.

The literature seen has showed us the necessity to overcome the automatic and positive relationship between growth and well-being and oblies us to reconfigure the way we measure well-being in our societies. Since the Easterlin Paradox published in 1974, where it was proven that up to a certain level more income it is not translated into more happiness, the corpus of Economics should focus on building a wider notion of happiness or well-being, accepting it involves more components than the material. Initiatives such as the Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan or the cosmovision of Buen Vivir in Latin America are an example of this large path the economic field needs to begin. The construct of well-being cannot be more associated with material growth: the good life and the human development as a whole is a much more complex phenomena that needs urgent attention.

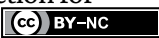
The idea of human development must be opposed to the fetishism of numbers in order to resolve this challenge. The emergence of social wills that strive for participation, autonomy, and a fairer distribution of the available resources must be opposed to vertical management by the State and the exploitation of some groups by others. Hence, the implementation of alternative pathways to well-being in Economics, mentioned in this chapter, have gained unprecedented significance.

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The Relationship between Fandom and Well-Being

Kei Aoki

Abstract

This study focuses on the relationship between fandom and well-being. Fandom refers to the act of endorsing something, whether it is a person or a nonperson such as an artist, game character, or specific brand. In other words, fandom can be seen as the ultimate customer engagement. Previous study has suggested that customer-brand engagement contributes to improved customer well-being with the concept of flourishing. This study provides quantitative support for this finding by surveying those involved in fandoms. Under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions, people were subjected to various behavioral restrictions. Entertainment was deemed unnecessary, and various events had to be canceled or scaled back. However, fans supported their favorites in a variety of ways and in turn found fulfillment and happiness through such activities. In the long run, the act would have contributed to the improvement of the fans' own well-being. This study presents a way of value co-creation between the supporters and the recipients that can be paraphrased as that between a customer and brand.

Keywords: customer-brand engagement, well-being, fandom, co-creation, flourishing, PERMA

1. Introduction

This study aims to contribute to the development of value co-creation between firms and their customers. Specifically, the study will focus not only on the advantages of the company but also on the advantages of the customer and will have implications for maximizing the customer's happiness. These days, while algorithms are being used to drive purchases, there are also active attempts by firms to engage customers and build brand experience together [1, 2]. This study takes the latter position and focuses on customer-brand engagement (CBE). This study will focus on highly engaged customers and investigate the benefits that CBE brings to them and present "the other side of CBE." There have been various studies that have addressed the benefits that CBE can bring to firms [2, 3]. On the other hand, Aoki and Ishizuka [4] focused on customers' benefits and suggested that CBE contributes to improved customer well-being with qualitative data for specific brands. This study tests their statement using quantitative data for a wide range of genres.

1.1 Customer-brand engagement

CBE has been viewed as a precursor to brand loyalty [5, 6]. Brand loyalty includes attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty [7, 8]. While behavioral loyalty increases corporate management metrics such as market share [7, 9–11], attitudinal loyalty refers to a customer's emotional attachment toward a brand [8, 12]. This study focuses on attitudinal loyalty and examines how it influences on customers.

CBE was defined as: "The level of a customer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions" [13]. These inherent qualities remain the same in online CBE studies [14, 15]. This study follows Hollebeek's definition of CBE [13] and focuses on highly engaged customers.

1.2 Fandom as a phenomenon of high engagement

In this study, the phenomenon of "fandom" is discussed in relation to CBE. Fandom is a general popular culture, including pop music, romance novels, comics, Hollywood mass-appeal stars, and so on, that has been reshaped by a specific group of people with a passion for it [16]. Pearson [17] points out that digital development has blurred the boundaries between firms and individual fans and is giving rise to new forms of cultural production. The ambiguity of the boundary between firm and customer has been noted in customer engagement studies, for example, Jaakkola and Alexander [18] point out that customer engagement behaviors contribute to value co-creation.

Under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions, people were subjected to various behavioral restrictions. Entertainment was deemed unnecessary, and various events had to be canceled or scaled back. However, fans continued to support their favorites in a variety of ways. In doing so, the fans themselves found their lives fulfilling and happy by engaging in online streaming and communication with other fans through social networking services. In fact, earlier studies have even shown that being a part of a fandom increases happiness [19, 20].

Such relationship could be explained as an ultimate CBE; customers are spending their time and passion to co-create value with the firm. Fandom is not only about real people but also about a variety of things, including in-game characters, specific regions, and buildings, even endorsements of specific brands are included.

1.3 The relationship between customer-brand engagement and well-being

Aoki and Ishizuka [4] focused on highly engaged brand customers, including both hedonic and utilitarian brands, and suggested that CBE could increase customers' well-being. They examined the process of deepening customer engagement and considered how the brand-customer relationship impacts customer's well-being using PERMA model developed in positive psychology to measure flourishing [21]. PERMA stands for positive emotions, engagement, relationships with others, meaning in life, and accomplishment.

It has been argued that happiness and well-being, despite being closely related concepts [22], should be distinguished [23]. Ryff [24] delineated well-being as enduring life challenges, such as having a sense of purpose and direction, achieving satisfying relationships with others, and gaining a sense of self-realization. Seligman [21] also pointed out that well-being sometimes includes hardships; however, people could still find life satisfaction and feel a sense of accomplishment. He defined well-being as the ultimate objective of positive psychology and argued that well-being is sustainable

and separate from “happiness” in the aspects of time span [21]. In terms of fandom, while each activity is one time, the overall activity is sustained and embedded in the lives of the participants. Thus, this study focuses on the relationship between fandom and well-being as encompassing even happiness.

Aoki and Ishizuka [4] found that all the PERMA elements were included in the deepening CBE process and that of these, relationships with others are deeply related, based on qualitative data. This study aims to provide quantitative support for their finding by surveying those involved in fandom representing highly engaged customers. This study will investigate the following research question: Does fandom increase the well-being of the participants?

2. Method

2.1 Sample

The data were collected through a market research company from February 22 to 25, 2022. Data from 2046 respondents (aged 18 to 65 years, mean age 42.8 years, 54.5% male) were used in the survey after removing an unreliable sample of 2067 respondents. Then, the respondents were divided into fandom participants and nonparticipants to compare levels of well-being.

2.2 The level of involvement in fandom

First, the respondents were asked if they engage in fandom (multiple answer):

1. Supporting real people (e.g. popstars, artists, actors, voice actors, athletes, authors, historical figures, YouTubers, and cosplayers).
2. Supporting characters (e.g. anime/game/manga characters, mascot characters, vocaloids, and Vtubers).
3. Supporting other than characters (e.g. swords, architecture, trains, Buddhist statues, and animals).
4. None of the above.

Other than those who chose 4), respondents were asked to describe the activities related to fandom. Following the finding of Aoki and Ishizuka (4), this study examines fandom based on the relationships with others. In addition to relationships between the fans themselves and their favorites and relationships with other fans, fandom also includes experiences that are encountered by the fans themselves. The respondents who are involved in fandom described the frequency of 10 activities as: (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, and (4) usually (**Table 1**).

2.3 The level of well-being

The level of well-being was measured using a PERMA-Profiler developed by Butler and Kern [25] via 11 international surveys (N = 31, 966). The respondents evaluated each of the 15 items (three items per PERMA domain) (**Table 2**) on an 11-point Likert

1. Going to see a live concert, stage performance, etc.	a) Alone b) With someone
2. Viewing contents (videos, images, books, etc.)	a) Alone b) With someone
3. Visiting places (including collaborative events, etc.) related to the favorites	a) Alone b) With someone
4. Contacting your favorites directly by sending letters or gifts and so on	
5. Buying official products of the favorites	
6. Own the same items as your favorites or collect items in their image color	
7. Talk about the attractiveness of the favorites on social networking sites	

Table 1.
Fandom activities in the questionnaire.

scale (0 to 10). The average score of the three questions per element was used in the analysis as it is recommended by Butler and Kern [25].

2.4 Control variables

In addition to the data of fandom and well-being, the following data were collected as control variables: age, gender (1 = male, 0 = female), marital status (1 = married and 0 = unmarried), employment status (1 = unemployed, 2 = part-time, 3 = full-time), educational background (1 = junior high school, 2 = high school, 3 = college, 4 = undergrad, 5 = graduate school), annual income level (1 = 0, 2 = less than JPY 1 million, 3 = less than JPY 2 million, ..., 11 = less than JPY 12 million, 13 = less than JPY 15 million, 14 = less than JPY 20 million, 15 = more JPY 20 million approx. USD 1.5 thousand). For clarification, employment status represents the length of labor time, and educational background represents the length of educational period.

P1	In general, how often do you feel joyful?
P2	In general, how often do you feel positive?
P3	In general, to what extent do you feel contented?
E1	How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?
E2	In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?
E3	How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?
R1	To what extent do you receive help and support from others when you need it?
R2	To what extent do you feel loved?
R3	How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?
M1	In general, to what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?
M2	In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile?
M3	To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?
A1	How many times do you feel you are making progress toward accomplishing your goals?
A2	How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?
A3	How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?

Note. Respondents are shown in alternating order.

The PERMA-Profiler consists of 23 items that include elements other than PERMA; 15 items are highlighted for the analysis of this study.

Table 2.
PERMA-profiler (Butler and Kern, 2016).

2.5 Analysis

First, the respondents were divided into the fandom participants and nonparticipants. Then, the score of each element of PERMA between two groups was compared. To validate the results, multiple regression analyses were conducted to verify the relationship between the elements of PERMA and the participation in fandom (1 = yes and 0 = no) and other attributes as control variables. Although the data included ordinal and dummy variables, they were used in the analysis as proxy variables for the relative magnitude of each item. Finally, a cluster analysis was conducted to classify the fandom participants by their involvement in the activities and analyze fandom in a more detailed format.

3. Results

3.1 The relationship between fandom and PERMA

The respondents' (n = 2046) participation in the fandom was as follows (multiple answer):

1. Supporting real people: 35.2% (n = 721)
2. Supporting characters: 20.9% (n = 428)
3. Supporting other than people/characters: 15.2% (n = 311)
4. None of the above apply: 48.6% (n = 994)

Those who chose the fourth option (n = 994, mean age 45.3 years, 54.0% male) were classified as non-fandom participants, and the rest were classified as participants (n = 1052, mean age 40.4 years, 55.0% male).

First, the level of well-being of the two groups was compared using the PERMA model, which consists of positive emotion ($\alpha = 0.85$), engagement ($\alpha = 0.79$), relationship ($\alpha = 0.81$), meaning ($\alpha = 0.89$), and accomplishment ($\alpha = 0.82$) (see details in **Table 2**). It includes an item with a Cronbach's alpha slightly below 0.8, but in view of the design of the scale itself, the original version of the scale was retained. As a result, fandom participants showed significantly higher levels of well-being in all criteria—positive emotion ($t = 5.95$, $df = 2010.18$, $p < 0.001$), engagement ($t = 10.04$, $df = 2003.63$, $p < 0.001$), relationship ($t = 5.44$, $df = 2029.87$, $p < 0.001$), meaning ($t = 5.40$, $df = 2027.15$, $p < 0.001$), and accomplishment ($t = 4.91$, $df = 2019.62$, $p < 0.001$)—than the nonparticipants (**Table 3**).

Furthermore, regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of participation in fandom after eliminating other factors that could influence well-being. The dependent variables are the elements of PERMA, and the independent variables are the fandom dummy, gender dummy, age, marital status dummy, educational background, employment status, and annual income. Before the analysis, to avoid multicollinearity, it was confirmed that the residuals of each dependent variable followed a normal distribution and the VIF of each independent variable is less than 3 (**Table 4**). The results showed that participation in knowledge sharing was a significant predictor of all PERMA elements: positive emotion ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 4.80$, $p < .001$), engagement ($\beta = 0.19$, $t = 7.56$, $p < .001$), relationship ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 3.93$, $p < .001$), meaning ($\beta = 0.11$, $t = 4.28$, $p < .001$), and accomplishment ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 4.16$, $p < .001$).

	Cronbach's alpha	Fandom participants (n = 1052)		Nonparticipants (n = 994)		t-Value
		M	SD			
PERMA						
Positive emotion	0.85	6.13	1.71	5.66	1.84	5.95***
Engagement	0.79	6.41	1.56	5.68	1.70	10.04***
Relationship	0.81	6.07	1.82	5.63	1.87	5.44***
Meaning	0.89	5.84	1.87	5.38	1.94	5.40***
Accomplishment	0.82	6.11	1.67	5.74	1.76	4.91***

****p* < .001.

Table 3.
Comparison of the level of well-being in two groups.

Therefore, it was shown that participation to the fandom had a significantly positive impact on the level of well-being.

3.2 Classification of fandom participants

To gain a better understanding of fandom, cluster analysis was conducted by the frequency of fandom activities by adopting the k-means method. After applying the number of clusters from two to five, the participants were classified into four clusters (Table 7). Each cluster was characterized as follows: Cluster 1 participants (n = 321, mean age = 41.0 years, 55.1% male) are more willing to engage in activities with peers than doing them alone (Table 7). They seem to go out to see a live concert or enjoy viewing their favor’s contents in home if someone does together or invite them and would not do it alone. Thus, they are named “accompanying.” In contrast, Cluster 3 participants (n = 176, mean age = 42.2 years, 54.0% male) prefer to do fandom-related activities alone (Table 7). They can accompany someone to the same extent as Cluster 1 participants, but they are more likely to go alone; accordingly, they are named “independent.” Cluster 2 participants (n = 313, mean age = 35.5 years, 56.2% male) are frequent with respect to overall fandom activity (Table 7). They work with their peers, sometimes alone, and even contact their favorites directly. It shows that they invest a lot of time and effort into their fandom, and thus, they are named “enthusiastic.” In opposition, Cluster 4 (n = 242, mean age = 44.5 years, 54.1% male) showed overall infrequency in fandom-related activities (Table 7). They engage in fandom without going out and buying goods, in other words, spend less time and money. Therefore, they are named “casual”.

Each cluster has a different degree of involvement in fandom and with others through it. This study examined the levels of PERMA for each cluster to see if such a difference in fandom involvement affects well-being. As a result of ANOVA, there were significant differences among the clusters for each of the PERMA factors: positive emotion ($F(3, 1048) = 16.98, p < 0.001$), engagement ($F(3, 1048) = 17.35, p < 0.001$), relationship ($F(3, 1048) = 23.72, p < 0.001$), meaning ($F(3, 1048) = 17.46, p < 0.001$), and accomplishment ($F(3, 1048) = 15.41, p < 0.001$).

Subsequently, differences in mean values of each PERMA element were assessed with Bonferroni multiple comparison (Table 5). The results indicated that the “enthusiastic” cluster (Cluster 2) showed significant higher levels in all PERMA elements than the other clusters (Table 5).

Dependent variable	Positive emotion		Engagement		Relationship		Meaning		Accomplishment		VIF
	β	t-Value	β	t-Value	β	t-Value	β	t-Value	β	t-Value	
Independent variable											
Participation to fandom	0.12	4.80***	0.19	7.56***	0.10	3.93***	0.11	4.28***	0.10	4.16***	1.05
Gender	-0.08	2.78**	-0.03	1.16	-0.12	4.18***	-0.04	1.45	-0.01	0.47	1.39
Age	-0.04	1.62	-0.07	2.43*	-0.14	5.17***	-0.13	4.61***	0.00	0.17	1.28
Marital status	0.13	4.85***	0.03	1.12	0.17	6.32***	0.18	6.58***	0.06	2.10*	1.23
Educational background	0.08	2.94**	0.07	2.64**	0.08	3.07**	0.08	2.92**	0.09	3.55***	1.13
Employment status	-0.01	0.31	-0.06	1.90	-0.02	0.76	-0.03	1.09	-0.02	0.50	1.75
Annual income	0.11	3.01**	0.09	2.62**	0.08	2.19*	0.18	5.06***	0.14	3.86***	2.19
R^2		0.04		0.048		0.05		0.07		0.04	
F		11.07***		12.57***		13.959***		18.38***		10.75***	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4.
 The results of regression analysis.

Cluster	n	M	SD	Difference with cluster 1	Difference with cluster 2	Difference with cluster 3
Positive emotion	1	321	6.07	1.54	—	—
	2	313	6.66	0.59***	—	—
	3	176	5.69	1.85	-0.97***	—
	4	242	5.85	1.78	-0.81***	0.16
Engagement	1	321	6.18	1.39	—	—
	2	313	6.93	1.54	0.75***	—
	3	176	6.31	1.47	0.13	-0.62***
	4	242	6.13	1.72	-0.04	-0.79***
Relationship	1	321	5.91	1.70	—	—
	2	313	6.76	1.62	0.84***	—
	3	176	5.62	1.96	-0.30	-1.14***
	4	242	5.72	1.86	-0.19	-1.03***
Meaning	1	321	5.74	1.69	—	—
	2	313	6.43	1.77	0.69***	—
	3	176	5.31	1.87	-0.43	-1.12***
	4	242	5.59	2.04	-0.14	-0.83***
Accomplishment	1	321	5.98	1.54	—	—
	2	313	6.63	1.65	0.65***	—
	3	176	5.82	1.71	-0.16	-0.81***
	4	242	5.84	1.70	-0.14	-0.80***

***p < .001.

Table 5.
The result of multiple comparisons.

Cluster	n	a) Real people	b) Characters	c) Others	a) + b)	a) + c)	b) + c)	a) + b) + c)	Total
1: Accompanying	321	40.2%	18.1%	13.4%	12.1%	7.5%	2.2%	6.5%	100.0%
2: Enthusiastic	313	33.9%	18.5%	6.7%	17.6%	5.4%	1.9%	16.0%	100.0%
3: Independent	176	42.6%	13.6%	16.5%	8.5%	9.7%	1.7%	7.4%	100.0%
4: Light	242	47.5%	18.2%	12.8%	9.5%	7.0%	2.9%	2.1%	100.0%
Total	1052	40.4%	17.5%	11.8%	12.5%	7.1%	2.2%	8.5%	100.0%

Note. Values with the largest deviation from the total in each column are shown in bold.

Table 6.
 Distribution of fandom objects by clusters.

Table 6 shows the distribution of fandom objects by clusters. A chi-square test revealed that the distribution of fandom objective significantly differs in clusters ($\chi^2 = 67.79, df = 18, p < .001$). The “enthusiastic” Cluster 2 participants tended to have more multiples, which means that they have multiple favorites across genres and accordingly spent a lot of time and effort on fandom. The “independent” participants of Cluster 3 are more likely to target fandoms other than people and characters, which is consistent with them acting alone. The “casual” Cluster 4 participants had a relatively high percentage of respondents who supported only the person without crossing genres. The “accompanying” participants of Cluster 1 had a similar distribution as the total.

4. Conclusions

This study explored if fandom increases the well-being of the participants, and it was empirically demonstrated. The fandom participants showed significant higher levels of well-being. The “enthusiastic” cluster (Cluster 2 in **Table 7**), which showed the highest involvement in fandom, depicted significantly higher levels of PERMA elements among others. Focusing on this cluster, it can be concluded that

Fandom activities	M (n = 1052)	SD	F-value	Center value			
				Cluster 1 (n = 321)	Cluster 2 (n = 313)	Cluster 3 (n = 176)	Cluster 4 (n = 242)
1 a) Go to see alone	2.40	1.02	667.79***	1.98	3.19	3.35	1.27
1 b) Go to see with peers	2.36	0.98	322.36***	2.37	3.18	2.38	1.30
2 a) View contents alone	3.11	0.86	49.78***	2.88	3.38	3.52	2.77
2 b) View contents with peers	2.60	0.97	132.11***	2.65	3.25	2.32	1.88
3 a) Visit related places alone	2.25	1.00	677.63***	1.82	3.18	2.91	1.15
3 b) Visit related places with peers	2.23	0.98	521.79***	2.17	3.22	2.08	1.14
4 Contant directly	1.84	0.91	245.48***	1.73	2.65	1.63	1.07
5 Buy official goods	2.53	0.95	290.42***	2.57	3.28	2.53	1.51
6 Buy related goods	2.26	0.98	348.81***	2.31	3.16	1.92	1.28
7 Talk on SNS	2.20	1.00	243.59***	2.15	3.08	1.83	1.38

*** $p < .001$.

Table 7.
The results of cluster analysis.

the improvement in well-being that is associated with participation in fandom is not provided by someone else, but by the participants themselves, through their own active involvements. They may work with their peers or even alone, depending on the situation. Some are even involved in more than one genre of fandom, and it can be assumed that they select the target to support and how to support it of their own volition. If relationships with others contributed to better well-being, the “accompanying” cluster (Cluster 1 in **Table 7**) would show higher values than the “independent” and “casual” clusters (Cluster 3 and 4 in **Table 7** respectively), but no significant differences were identified. Accordingly, this study concludes that spontaneous participation in fandom improves well-being.

This conclusion is in line with Aoki and Ishizuka [4], which suggested that the process of constructing CBE could positively impact customers’ well-being. They noted that brands and customers recognize a mutual alignment of values and build strong engagement in the process of achieving each goal [4]. In this process, rather than benefitting from something from the brand, customers were gaining opportunities for personal growth and self-actualization through the brand [4]. In this study, fandom participants were indicated to have improved their well-being by acting on their own initiative. This study aimed to provide quantitative support for the findings of Aoki and Ishizuka [4]. Finally, it was suggested that the two studies are also consistent qualitatively.

5. Implications

This study exhibited the benefits of CBE to customers themselves by showing the benefit of fandom participants. While various studies have addressed the benefits that CBE can bring to firms [2, 3], this study presents new findings by focusing on benefits on the customer side and contributes to a better understanding of CBE.

Furthermore, this study added new findings to fandom research by showing that participation in fandom improves well-being using findings in positive psychology. While fandom has been shown to increase happiness [19, 20], this study demonstrates empirically that it leads to increased well-being over the long term. This study is notable in that it focuses not on a relationship between a particular favorite and a fan, but the activities of fandom itself. It is a more natural state of daily life to consider people’s well-being and ensures the validity of the findings.

This study is even a blow to consumerism. Although consumerism was initially advocated for the purpose of protecting consumer rights [26], it has even been argued in recent years that it encourages mass consumption and reduces consumer well-being [27, 28]. In recent years, the diffusion of the Internet has led to the consideration of digital consumerism, which does not compromise the well-being of consumers [29]. On the other hand, it has been pointed out since the 1990s that companionship and social support improve well-being more than consumption behavior [30]. Consistent with these findings, this study shows that companies do not promote materialism and reduce people’s well-being but can amplify it by providing opportunities to engage with society.

These findings have important practical implications. This study showed that firms can deepen customer relationships while improving the customers’ well-being. This means that value co-creation between the firm and its customers can enhance the well-being of the participants. By achieving this, a firm demonstrates its purpose, in addition to the commercial pursuit of profit. As the study results indicate that firms

do not directly enhance customers' well-being, it is important to motivate spontaneous behavior from customers. It will be significant to provide products and/or services that foster fandom, in other words, to make people enthusiastic about them. This will ultimately benefit both the firm and its customers and will be the achievement of essential value co-creation.

There are several limitations to this study. To increase the likelihood of fandom participants appearing in this study, a wide range of genres were surveyed. Therefore, while the results of this study were able to provide an overview, they were not able to go into detail. In order to increase the universality of the results of this study, a more in-depth study is required, including the collection of qualitative data. Additionally, the data for this study were collected entirely in Japan. Fandom is greatly influenced by cultural backgrounds. Future studies are expected to make cross-cultural comparisons.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

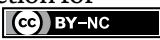
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Thanks for Asking! How UAE-Based University Students Conceptualize Happiness and How Institutions Can Improve It

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Abstract

How happiness is defined depends on who is asked. In the case of universities, student happiness should prevail, yet their voices are often overlooked. This is also the case in the research literature where non-Western views are less frequently reflected. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country whose population is comprised of nearly 90% expatriate residents, is a good study case as campuses are filled with international students and the wellbeing of residents is a national priority. Responses from 80 UAE-based expatriate students reveal they are happiest with friends and in social activities and interactions; they want more opportunities to connect socially in classrooms and campuses, efforts which can be crafted by faculty. They also want joyful, inspiring learning where they can discuss and be exposed to other views, with many driven by the need to feel productive, efficacious and engaged. Solutions included the need for faculty to develop warmer student relationships, the maintenance of online learning to reflect realities of work and relationships, and for students to be treated with more respect as fee-paying adults. As the number of international students rise, research into their happiness and what universities can do to increase it remains a global priority.

Keywords: happiness, university, institutions, students, qualitative, belonging, social connections

1. Introduction

University is a time of transition; greater independence and less oversight mark the social, learning, and emotional worlds of young adults. With freedom to make life choices, have fun, and choose one's friends, there is also more isolation and stress, financial worry, and learning struggles [1–3]. Early adulthood's slope is slippery; many young people thrive, but some flounder, and others even suffer. Indeed, mental health is taxed upon university entrance with depression, anxiety, and stress peaking around the age of 25 [4–6]. In the Middle East/North Africa region, depression and

anxiety in young people are higher than global averages [7, 8] and the prevalence of mental health issues is growing with implications for learning, quality of life, relationships and future work outcomes.

Yet, greater than the mere absence of illbeing, the presence of wellbeing is also conducive to a good life. Young people who experience greater life satisfaction and more frequent experiences of positive emotion are more likely to attain a post-secondary degree, search for work, be hired and promoted, as well as get a higher salary [9–11]. Studies conducted in schools and universities show that greater wellbeing boosts learning by as much as 6 months of additional learning and reduces the chances of poor performance [12–15]. Greater wellbeing also spells fewer mental health issues such as depression, loneliness, and anxiety into adulthood [16, 17]. More than simply “nice to have”, wellbeing is protective as well as promotive of good living, social relating and learning.

Still, wellbeing is often positioned as the responsibility of counseling departments alone and often takes the form of consumable skills and awareness raising initiatives [1, 3, 18]. By construing the psychosocial needs of students as individual mental health issues, institutions avoid the responsibility of building positive ecosystems. Yet, with local stigma around help-seeking and poorly resourced mental health services [19, 20], alongside post-COVID learning losses and weak performance on university exams more generally [21, 22], and ongoing future economic and employment uncertainty, learning institutions must and can do more [2, 3, 23–25]. Further, as many countries are now focused on wellbeing as a national priority, as is the case in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where this study is situated, educational institutions have additional incentive to meet this national aim, although universities have been slow to adopt the view that wellbeing matters. Knowing what students perceive as helpful is necessary. Comprised of nearly 90% expatriates, the UAE is a hub for university students. Soliciting their views can help pave the way towards developing more responsive institutions.

1.1 “Positive universities”: more than learning and profit

Positive universities [26] have recently been identified in the field of positive psychology as institutional ecosystems that are expressly designed to nurture and facilitate student wellbeing. Positive universities explicitly prioritize wellbeing as much as academic performance. To drive wellbeing agendas, they have at their disposal a range of drivers including potential curriculum adjustments, special for-credit wellbeing courses, campus initiatives, architectural design specifications, wellbeing policies aimed at student, administrative, learning and management processes, as well as aims to strengthen interpersonal relationships. Topics such as fairness, inclusion and integrity, as much as joy, curiosity, depression and loneliness are routinely discussed. This focus is primarily aimed at students, but the wellbeing of faculty, employees, as well as leadership and management is also maximized. Wellbeing is construed as a business imperative given its links to organizational productivity, turnover, profit, and customer loyalty [27–29]. It is equally a learning instrument and student retention tool given that it is tied to employability, university drop-out rates, academic learning and future work satisfaction [30, 31]. Positive institutions are preventive as much as proactive in nature, predicting what students, faculty, management, employers, and community stakeholders need to emotionally thrive. Parents, alumni, and institutional partners are also actively involved. Positive universities deliver students ready for work and more importantly, prepared to contribute to society and maximize their own potential.

Yet, the reality is that being a university student is often marked by loneliness, lack of meaning, and low or negative moods [1–3]. For students in international forms of education, there is often a disconnect between student's prior education systems and that which is being offered, such that independent critical thinking, student-led motivation, academic writing, defending one's ideas, and group-based learning conflicts with memorization and rote learning [32–34]. English language proficiency not only affects learning, but socialization and the ability and willingness to ask for assistance [32, 34, 35]. That nearly all faculty are also expatriates and have their own culturally embedded notions of learning and relating is another adjustment students make [34].

Further, the wellbeing of young people has often been overlooked as institutions do not consider it their concern [36]. In the UAE, young people are often “Third Culture Kids”; that is, not a product of their parent's home country (i.e., in some cases parents come from two separate countries, in which the young person has spent no time), and not belonging to the UAE national culture either, making needs for attachment and belonging salient. Further, after completing secondary school, they transition to higher education while continuing to live under their parent's roof and are often more motivated to spend time on campus in a bid for independence [37]. Their continued parental living arrangements and expatriate status has paradoxically meant institutions construe wellbeing as a private family and not an institutional concern.

Moreover, in the Arabian Gulf emerging economies, the focus of private institutions as new operating campuses is to prosper in competitive institutional markets, climb international rankings and generate profit for local investors or home campuses [34, 38–40]. Efforts to stem costs have meant that community service, professional development, wellbeing and mental health commitments are not priorities. With the number of international students rising and the internationalization of higher education growing globally, including in the Gulf [34, 38, 39], institutions have an interest in developing themselves to meet the demand alongside the psychosocial and academic needs of those who attend them.

1.2 The case for asking what matters

Despite growing interest in wellbeing, there is little consensus around what it means [41–43], especially at university [3]. It is often used interchangeably with the umbrella term of “happiness,” referring more generally to an affective state of feeling good, while “wellbeing” refers to, and also includes functioning well over time. Further, while research to guide initiatives grows, what is relied upon more often stems from the West (e.g., [1]) and is based on “WEIRD” samples, i.e., Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic [44] that is not always helpful elsewhere. Further, the most recent iteration of positive psychology 3.0 construes wellbeing from a systems perspective, whereby contexts are the unit of intervention and understanding, versus individuals alone [41, 45]. This removes the onus on individuals to singularly engage with their wellbeing, instead sharing that responsibility with the systems in which they operate.

There is also a growing importance of the need to include participant voices, often via a qualitative lens to produce insights that are not available through standardized means, but also to understand how wellbeing is lived [46, 47]. The lay conceptions that individuals hold, that is, their personal beliefs about the nature of their own happiness, its values, antecedents, as well as outcomes, highlight what matters to them and reflect their values and experiences [48–50]. Listening to the views of young people as consumers of education and wellbeing can help institutions guide actions, policies, and initiatives accordingly [2, 51].

Indeed, research involving young people often reveals a disconnect between the approaches they deem important versus those put forward by institutions [52]. For example, in school, young people identified the need for informal, immersive ways to foster social connectedness and support, over individual skills-based tools and strategies [18, 52]. Similar results have been found in a group of Chinese university students studying in Australia who identified wellbeing offerings they felt would help them best, including cross-cultural interactions, non-discriminatory campus environments and greater support with employment and housing opportunities [48]. These were in great contrast with what was being offered on campus, such as stress-management services and individual counseling. Considering students as both consumers and co-producers of interventions [53] alongside other institutional and community changes can give them voice, a wellbeing intervention itself, and remove the burden from either group solving wellbeing challenges alone.

In sum, higher education has a role in strengthening student wellbeing [1–3, 23, 48]; yet individual-level interventions designed to “fix” students rather than identifying the institutional drivers that fuel problems are often preferred. Inquiry into the broader systemic factors to support the wellbeing of young people is growing as institutional transformations, like physical space, part-time study options, faculty training in wellbeing, and policies around mental health, diversity and inclusion for example, may have larger impacts than individual intervention [1, 3, 54]. Thus, what institutions can and should do is growing as a topic of scientific inquiry, as well as a business imperative. Accordingly, we explore these views.

2. The present study

A qualitative design was utilized to gather responses, with the following written prompts given to participants. We used the term “happy” rather than “wellbeing” as we felt it was more readily understood by students as an immediate emotional response that could be traced back to an event, set of circumstances or replicable moments that presumably could lead to greater wellbeing if instituted over time. The questions included:

1. Describe moments when you are happy at university. What is involved, what are you doing, where are you, how do you feel? Is anyone else with you or involved somehow?
2. Describe moments when you are unhappy at university. What are you doing, where are you, how do you feel? Is anyone else with you or involved somehow?
3. What are two real, practical small things your university could do to make you happier?

2.1 Participants

The survey link was given to students in various universities (i.e., Canadian University Dubai, University of Sharjah, Murdoch University, Ajman University and New York University Abu Dhabi) in the UAE, with the overall sample reaching 80 students, of which 59 were female. The ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, with one student being 44. The sample included 31 students from South Asia (India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), one from South Asia (Japan), 26 from the Middle East (Bahrain, UAE, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan), 14 from Africa (Egypt, Nigeria, Tanzania, Madagascar, Malawi, Tunisia, Sudan), three from Europe (France, Swiss), three from America (Canada, Brazil) and two did not share their nationality.

2.2 Procedure

Data was collected in spring and summer of 2022, with ethics approval being granted by the host institution, Canadian University Dubai, with participants giving informed consent to take part. Responses were anonymous and respondents could withdraw at any given time. Only demographic data such as gender age and nationality were collected. Functioning as a convenience and snowball survey, students referred the link to whomever they felt would be interested in taking part. The survey link was further shared across UAE student social media platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn) for participation.

2.3 Analysis

Given the need to understand the experiences of students, as well as their preferences and views of what makes for a good learning experience and what can be done to instill it, a qualitative design was utilized to gather responses, with thematic analysis [55–56] used to draw patterns and commonalities. In developing a coding system, values, and beliefs rather than behavior were the initial focus. This was followed by a second round of coding that identified practices, often understood as outward manifestations of deeper value systems. The codes were placed into a master list and organized into higher-order themes. The third stage involved categorizing behaviors under the themes and seeing the sub-themes emerge. Given the number of responses received, only a sample is included to illustrate each theme.

2.4 Results

Happiness. In asking when students were happiest at university (Question 1), several themes arose including: Social interactions, Efficacy, Group projects/events, and Social/Physical environment. Each is illustrated with examples below.

Theme 1: Social interactions. Social interactions were the most frequently identified and broadly distributed contributor to happiness among participants (74 responses), with friendships being cited most regularly. Participants were happiest when “talking to my friends” (India, 19, Female), “meet my friends after a while we go grab lunch” (Jordan, 19, Female), “hanging out with friends between classes” (Sri Lanka, 19, Female), “when I am surrounded by my friend group” (Pakistan, 21, Female), “working on projects or assignments with my friends” (Pakistan, 19, Female), and “when I’m hanging out at friends in one of the nearby coffee shops” (India, 22, Male). The “ability to make new friends and colleagues” (India, 21, Male) was also noted. It was not only close friendships that mattered, but loose ties and being in the midst of others social interactions and activities, i.e., “when I get to interact with a lot of people” (Pakistan, 21, Female), “when I am around people who entertain and challenge me” (India, 20, Male), “meeting new people and learning from them” (South Africa, 20, Female), “being around new people” (India, 21, Male), “interacting with random nice people” (Female), “when I meet new people and have a fast, fun bond with them” (Jordan, 18, Female).

Theme 2: Efficacy. Another theme identified in this question was feeling productive, accomplished and as though time was well spent (34 responses), particularly across academic endeavors, i.e., “getting good grades during my courses” (Jordan, 18, Female), “when I do well on my exams and get the grades I want” (Bahrain, 20, Female). Yet, such feelings were deeper than extrinsic concerns, they also involved feeling as though “I am learning something valuable and my time is being spent well” (India, 21, Male), “happier moments for me are those which I gain knowledge” (Jordan, 19, Male), or when “I feel really motivated to work” (Jordan, 18, Female), “I have a passion for learning those courses” (Tanzania, 21, Female). A sense of working well was also noted: “I know I’m being productive” (Jordan, 19, Female), “getting positive feedback” (Iran, 22, Female), “have a productive study session and get done with work” (Pakistan, 20, Female), as well as feel the “satisfaction of completing a task” (Bahrain, 21, Male) and feeling “good about myself and accomplished” (Syria/America, 25, Male). Others felt good about their continued language acquisition and felt it contributed to a good day: “when I feel I am understanding the whole lecture, this might be weird but my english level [is] not that good, so when I am speaking, listening, and understanding, I feel so happy” (Iraq, 22, Female).

Theme 3: Participation in Group Projects or Events. While socializing was important, so was working towards something across group projects in or outside classes, as well as during events (31 responses). This feeling was expressed “when I am able to participate in extra curriculums and engage in club activities and events being hosted at or by the university” (India, 21, Male), “when its fest day and we have to volunteer to make things happen” (India, 20, Female), or during “creative activities kept by the university [which] keep me happy as well” (Pakistan, 21, Female). It also emerged while “working on projects or assignments” (Pakistan, 19, Female), with “team members who are all willing to do their part of work for a project” (South Africa, 21, Female). This feeling of engagement also grew from students “participat[ing] in class” (Pakistan, 23, Male; Syrian, 19, Female), particularly “in an interactive class” (Nigeria, 20, Female), as well as “when I make money and work on big projects” (Syrian/American, 25, Male), “engaging in some sort of activity or attending/hosting events” (Egyptian, 19, Female), or “involved in interesting debates, extra curricular activities, wellness Wednesdays” (Brazilian, 20, Female).

Theme 4: Social and Physical Environment. The final contributor involved the physical and social atmosphere (19 responses), which included physical spaces in which to feel good, i.e., “when I’m at the university library and when I can enjoy the peace and quiet and study/read by myself” (India, 20, Female), “sitting outside in the sun” (Bahrain, 21, Male), as well as classroom dynamics where positive interactions were mobilized. Examples include, “I love having more people in the group involved, it makes the setting welcoming and more fun” (Egyptian, 18, Female), “Fun discussions, disagreements, solutions, etc., majority of the class is involved in discussion, the professor is participating, the classroom isn’t too cold” (Lebanon, 22, Female), “the classroom is uplifting and professor engaging” (Malawi, 19, Female), “when I go to a certain class that I know everyone is interacting together and the professor is very much passionate about what he/she is talking about. It makes me feel like I’m actually being taught and helps me with my communication skills” (Lebanon/Palestinian, 19, Female), “It’s calm at class so the atmosphere is good” (UAE, 18, Female).

Unhappiness. In learning more about what made students unhappy (Question 2), participant responses revealed three themes: Classroom difficulties, Personal/social issues, and University-specific issues.

Theme 1: Classroom difficulties (academic pressure and faculty relationships). A recurring theme was academic pressure as well as tense or dull classroom settings (76 responses). Examples included, “being given an assignment I don’t think I’d be able to do” (19, Sudan, Female), “overwhelmed with work or did bad on an exam” (UAE, 19, Male), “studying for an exam and not receiving a good grade even though I worked really hard” (Jordan, 18 Female), “receiving negative feedback” (Brazil, 20, Female), or “when my grades are lower than expected and I feel crushed by the pressure to increase my GPA” (Bahrain, 19, Female). Being only assessed via grades was also disheartening, “allow us to somehow enjoy the process of learning with less fear of the way we will be graded” (Jordan, 21, Male). It also related to managing one’s time and tasks: “I’m in a terrible mood when there’s too many assignments and the due dates are at similar times” (India, 19, Female), “stress due to group assignments especially when the other members are uncooperative” (Sri Lanka, 22, Female), or “lack of communication between group members” (Iran, 22, Female).

Many responses reflected issues with professors as well as the classroom environments they cultivated: “a monotone lecture with very few people attending the class” (Lebanon, 22, Female), “I dislike certain professors because they really drain me and make me want to go home” (Malawian, 19, Female), “when the professor is just reading off of presentations and doesn’t form a connection with the students and teaches very bluntly” (Lebanon-Palestine, 19, Female), “when professors aren’t engaging with the class I might as well read off a textbook at home” (19, India, Female). The lack of active engagement was often noted, i.e., “when the university is very stagnant and we fall into the same routine every other day as well as bad professors who aren’t able to teach their course material effectively” (India, 19, Female), “when I don’t get to interact with my peers” (Bahrain, 19, Female), “feeling undervalued or unengaged by a class and its material or being forced to take a class that does not add any value to my major are all pretty ‘feels bad’ moments (India, 19, Male).

Other issues involved professor-student interactions and resulting learning issues, i.e., “when I don’t understand a topic” (Iran, 19, Female), “when questions aren’t answered and there is a lack of communication between the instructor and I” (Iran, 22, Female), “disrespectful professors” (N/A). Others felt “anxiety about presenting in class because I feel the professors judging me” (Egypt, 19 Female). The perception of being “treated like children rather than working adults” (India, 22, Male), or “not being treated the same as offline students” (Iran, 20, Female) was bothersome, especially in a continued hybrid learning model where some students attended class in person, while others attended the same class virtually and felt ignored on screen. This student further shared his thoughts: “Being anywhere on campus often makes me feel unhappy. Most of it comes from how students are often treated as children or teenagers instead of working adults. We have school staff constantly policing us and watching our every move. It’s ridiculous how some staff think they can get away with talking to students the way they do. As someone who’s never lived here before, it’s not normal. Everyone should be treated with at least some respect. If the university could ease up on silly policies and rules that don’t enhance a student’s learning experience, that would help” (India, 22, Male). Feeling isolated due to language was also difficult, i.e., “I noticed that start affecting me in class when I see students speak and communicate easily; sometimes I feel I am dumb; my emotions start rising when I try to develop my English” (Iraq, 22, Female).

Theme 2: Personal and Social Issues. Several students (38 responses) reported difficulties in feeling connected with others, i.e., “it’s just lonely” (UAE, 19, Male), “living without my parents here can be lonely sometimes” (Madagascar, 19,

Female), “when I’m eating alone and there are a lot of students laughing around me” (Iraq, 22, Female), “when I feel left out socially. No one thinks to include me or ask me if I would like to join them. Or if I’m sitting alone and none of my colleagues decides to chat me up” (Jordan, 21, Male), “not being able to meet new people because I’m a shy person” (Jordan, 18, Female). A lack of belonging made being alone worse, i.e., “when I’m outside class alone and not doing much” (India, 17, Male), “I hate sitting or walking alone at university because I’m afraid people will think I don’t have friends” (Syria, 19, Female), “when I’m alone in university, time goes by slower” (Switzerland Pakistan - Iraq/Iran origin, 21, Male).

Other issues involved stress, anxiety, and irritations, such as “lack of sleep, feelings of depression and anxiety” (N/A), being “overworked between work and university, I have burned out and am constantly exhausted” (Lebanon, 21, Female), “my life at uni is miserable, I suffer from a few auto-immune diseases/conditions, I work a part time job 3 times a week from 7-4, I have to manage things at home with my family, and my romantic relationship as well as the 2 friends I have. University does not make it easier or better to handle any of my stress, rarely do I find happiness on campus” (Lebanon, 21, Female). Too much stimulation was also a problem: “when it’s loud and people are making unnecessary noise, it makes me feel overwhelmed and stressed” (Egypt, 18, Female), and “when I don’t get at least an hour of alone time, I feel drained” (Jordan, 18, Female). “Issues at home” (Nigeria, 20, Female) did not help.

Theme 3: Instrumental issues. Finally, issues were noted with respect to universities themselves (12 responses), including “finding my way to the university as there is no transport for me” (Iran, 20, Female), “paying extra fees especially for parking” (Tanzania, 21, Female), “worrying about housing and tuition” (Iran, 20, Female), “stressing over the financial burdens of being a college student and feelings of anxiety caused by that” (India, 21, Male), “not having access to free COVID tests” (India, 21, Male), “frustration with the Wi-Fi speed because it’s too slow and makes basic tasks impossible” (Tunisia, 19, Female), and when “the classroom is really COLD” (Lebanon, 22, Female).

Solutions. A range of solutions were provided to improve university life, including more attention to mental health and wellbeing, affordability, and improvements in accessibility.

Theme 1: Social Interactions. Students reported that their university could initiate social events such as field trips, sports, and skill development activities to make them happier (30 responses). These included suggestions to “involve more community-building or friendship-building activities” (Jordan, 21, Male), “provide university events like MUN [Model United Nations], global cultural day, or festivals” (Jordan, Canada, 18, female), “host more fun events such as debate competitions, cultural days, trips, workshops, fashion shows, movie night, open mic night” (Egypt, Sudan, 19, female), “fun events like bake sales or anything that everyone could participate in” (Syria, 19, female), “activities and workshops (ex: painting or bracelet making)” (Pakistan, 21, Female) and other events, “so we can get out of studying mode for some time” (Jordan, 19, Female).

Yet, it was not only events in themselves, but curated, intentional activities in which students could develop social connections, particularly in the classroom. For example, “maybe if they give us some [students] or create a group of students who have problems to make friends” (Iraq, 22, Female), “make it easier to meet new people” (Sudan, 19, Female), “involve more community-building or friendship-building activities. I do not mean events where we meet new people, but events where we get closer to the people we already know” (Jordan, 21, Male), and “adding more

group work and keeping it all in uni [classes], so that we meet new people” (Jordan, 28, Female). Recommendations to “have professors think of small things to make classes more interesting. Short surprise activities that relate to the course and are fun to do will really lift my mood up and actually make me want to stay for class” (India, 19, Female) were also advised.

Theme 2: Greater Empathy. Participants (11 responses) expressed the need for greater understanding and flexibility. For example, “make exams easier” (Bahrain, 19, female), “give us 5 minutes break to pray” (UAE, male). Students wanted to build good relations with their professors and requested “more understanding professors” (Bahrain, 21, male), “friendly professors” (India, 20, male). Several noted that stress levels needed to be addressed, i.e., “creating a less stressful environment for students” (Pakistan, 21, female), alongside an understanding that students also had lives beyond the classroom, i.e., “the stress that is given to us is not only taking time from us in university, it is taking time from us outside of university as well” (UAE, 22, female). Students added that universities could “actually care-- it is unbelievably stressful for students, specially new ones, and people that could helped have done nothing for me so far” (Iran, 20, female), “allow accommodations/extra understanding for many people that have much to handle in their daily lives, like work, and health issues” (Lebanon, 21, female), as well as “make more efforts to ensure we feel taken care of and that university is a safe and supportive place” (Brazil, 20, female).

Theme 3: University Services. Participants offered ways in which universities could satisfy needs (70 respondents). Five identified the need for mental health education, i.e., “focus on educating students about the importance of mental health. Help students overcome burnout” (South Africa, 20, female), “provide mental health courses [to] help students build self-awareness” (South Africa, 21, female). Others focused on physical wellness: “Nap room, Workout sessions” (Pakistan, 19, female); “A gym, unopened football field” (India, 20, male); “basketball court and events that gather people” (Canada, 18, Female). Others were more practical suggesting that “extra-curriculars [be] available and just as important a part of our university journey as education, so we could experience team work and leadership in different practical scenarios and receive certificates to document these experiences to add to our qualifications” like First Aid and/or “CPR training” (Egypt, 19 female), as well as “provide jobs within the university” (Pakistan, 23, male). Others added “flexible timings” (Malawi, 24, male; Pakistan, 23 male), “maybe shorten[ing] the time allotted for each class and add more breaks” (India, 20, female). Continuing online learning implemented during the pandemic was also noted, i.e., “allowing for the hybrid class model to continue is, in my opinion, necessary” (India, 21, male).

Non-classroom stressors were also noted, such as “affordable housing” (Iran, 20, female; Pakistan, 23, male) and “transport for ALL students” (Iran, 20, female). Others added, “provide us with free food” (Bangladesh, 18, female); “Snack boxes” (India, 18, female), “There are students who stay in the university for up to 12 hours and some of them are not able to afford food every single day for themselves” (Bangladesh, 18, female). “Access to free covid tests” (India, 21, male), free parking as many students drive to university, i.e., “parking is limited in time and can complicate things throughout the day” (France, 20, female), “sanitary pads in the girls bathroom” (Jordan, 18, Female), more “private”, “common” “Zen zones and an area where you can chill without being in the library and surrounded by other students” (Sri Lanka, 19, female; UAE, 19, male; 22, female), including “IMPROVE THE WIFI” (Tunisia, 19, Female), were identified. Tuition fees, hidden costs, and providing more accessible scholarships for all students and not only rewarding academic performance

was finally highlighted: “Offer more realistic grading requirements for scholarships, for example a 4.0 GPA for 40/50% doesn’t seem fair” (Egypt, 18, female); “offer more scholarships and increase the range of students who can get it” (Tanzania, 21, female).

2.5 Discussion

Many themes emerged, notably student happiness stemmed from (1) social interaction, including sharing, moments of fun, being seen and socially included; (2) feeling a sense of progress, efficacy, and that meaningful learning was occurring; and (3) being engaged in action, discussion, and working towards something worthwhile with others. In contrast, unhappiness was experienced when students felt (1) uninspired, unsupported, or disrespected; (2) misunderstood, excluded, and ignored; as well as (3) frustrated and anxious dealing with university services. Solutions involved the creation of connection opportunities, as well as the deliberate creation of interactions themselves. Building empathy and understanding across the university was also stressed as students, emerging adults with social, psychological, learning and financial needs, wanted less juvenile surveillance and more adult flexibility, respect, and engagement. Meaningful learning experiences that met their needs for growth over mere knowledge, were also identified. Facilitating parking and dining solutions, social events, as well as scholarships that were less oriented to grades were other solutions. Far from being naïve consumers, students are clear on what they need and how institutions can help. How their responses coincide with the literature and the practical steps universities can take is explored.

Belonging. In recent studies and reviews [3, 48, 57, 58], students noted relationships, social supports and a sense of belonging to, and identification with the university as vital to their wellbeing and academic performance. Indeed, interacting with classmates is linked to greater social and emotional wellbeing after class, feelings of belonging, as well as enjoying university to a greater degree [59]. To counteract rising student loneliness [60], feeling connected is not only vital in meeting psychosocial needs, but learning too. Students with a low sense of belonging often have lower GPAs, but in-class strategies like a writing exercise to affirm one’s values was effective in reversing GPA and improving wellbeing [57]. Strategies can be useful in managing disappointments around learning, particularly as students downgrade subsequent learning goals in the face of failure [61]. Online courses do not preclude togetherness either. Faculty can create online interaction as much as in the classroom, by using chat rooms, joint whiteboard activities, breakout rooms for discussion, etc. [62].

Peer Opportunities. Research is focusing on the development of positive student relationships to sustain nurturing environments versus an individual skills approach [52, 63]. Indeed, students who reported strong peer attachments had higher levels of adjustment to university life, with weaker attachments predicting more difficulties in adjustment [64]. Students who relied upon peer mentoring programs for example, showed significantly higher levels of self-esteem and social competence [65], with those offering mentorship also experiencing the same benefits [66]. Peer opportunities can extend to volunteer academic role models, institutionally designated study mentors and formal academic learning communities (i.e., peer cohort groups that study together over an academic program versus semester), which initiate students to more rigorous academic standards and learning processes, promote social inclusion and support [3, 67], and increase exposure to English speaking, a known stressor to those still developing language skills [32, 34, 35].

Wellbeing pedagogy. Positive psychology intervention programs are effective in decreasing symptoms of mental illness and increasing wellbeing [25, 68–70] and have been used in the region [71–73]. A for-credit course can remediate mental health concerns and strengthen wellbeing [2, 25] and also include financial literacy, career guidance, and attention to social issues. For example, a study in Lebanon [30] showed that university students with low life satisfaction were unable to envision their future employability; however, a greater future focus evolved alongside greater wellbeing. Including wellbeing promotive content into courses also aligns with evidence that changes to syllabi, courses, teaching pedagogy and classroom cultures can foster more positive student experiences and are solutions for faculty who do not know how to create more positive learning and social experiences [1, 2, 74, 75]. Simple strategies like the inclusion of a syllabus statement outlining the value of good mental health and resources for its promotion can help [76].

Faculty Relationships. Considered mentors, faculty members are often identified by students as being the top source of support [2], in addition to their teaching practices and methods of course design (i.e., opportunities for discussion, insight and personal development, and social connection) [74]. Thus, professional development for faculty in perceiving themselves in this role and not only dispensers of knowledge, is imperative. Much like schoolteachers or managers are being called upon to support the wellbeing needs of employees and students, faculty members will soon be called upon to add this to their responsibilities as the research is clear: greater wellbeing in young people produces greater learning [12–15]. Yet, faculty need not be concerned about being “soft”, in fact, students rated more positively faculty who were demanding, but helpful, attentive and engaging at the same time [77]. Psychosocial training for faculty around how not to cause micro-aggressions in the classroom, as well as mentor students effectively [78, 79] needs priority.

Institutional Policies & Practices. Mental health screening tools at entry and mechanisms to update one’s mental health status each semester are cost-effective, simple ways institutions can address issues. Done online much like student satisfaction surveys, these identify at-risk students. While these carry a degree of responsibility to self-identify, such systems are already used in communities and institutions [80–82]. Policies around mental health leave of absence, part-time study, alcohol or substance abuse, and financial aid are other examples. Financial aid (i.e., scholarships, bursaries, or loans) that is not tied to grades, but overall contribution, a learning mindset, social impact or other talents may lessen academic pressure [83]. Policies around how to welcome non-binary students in classrooms at registration, during exams and in the provision of physical spaces is key and rectifiable by designating gender-neutral bathroom options, offering preferred name and pronoun options, and providing campus-issued identification cards for exams (versus drivers’ licenses which “out” students) [79, 84, 85] are other interventions.

A frequently noted issue was financial costs of attending university, including ancillary costs relating to housing, parking, food, etc. As public transportation is developing and as many university students travel by car, parking is expensive. To help, universities can organize reduced-fee designated parking spaces for students, offer free bus service from designated pick-up and drop-off points [86], as well as sponsor ride-sharing apps designed to be shared among universities. Offering part-time study options is an uncommon route as the student body remains traditionally young, but also as part-time employment has not been a legal option until recently. With a change in regulation, more students now work as they pursue studies, but universities have been slow to cater to this group. Indeed, students have better mental

health when they enjoy a balance of study, work and family life, as well as less financial [87]. Likewise, requests for online learning remain beyond the pandemic; yet, many universities have opted to return to traditional “seat time” or offer zoom-like options, both of which are not particularly effective if teaching quality and instructional design is not maximized [88]. Offering online options for third or fourth year students already socialized to effective learning and known to faculty, combined with in-person working sessions can be effective ways to combine technology and work-life flexibility.

Closely related are concerns around the availability of affordable meals and housing. At present, university housing is often far from campus and prices are market rate [89]. Organized by the local education authority, cheaper rent options, public-private arrangements, rent to buy, or local room rental schemes must be examined as the high costs of city-living are passed on to students. Further, many students struggle with sourcing meals, especially when universities are centered in commercial centers catering to higher-end organizations, or when there is no access to on-site cooking facilities. Students are away from home for the first time and also not in the habit of cooking and or/preparing food for themselves leading to weight gain and unhealthy choices (i.e., [90]). Offering meal plans, canteen facilities, organized cooking classes with preplanned affordable menu examples, daily cooking with shared bulk-buying costs as a scheduled event, and availing discounts at grocery stores can help better habits be regained, costs to be shared and students and faculty to come together socially.

Regulation. At last, like the recommendations made by the OECD [91] to include in UAE institutional rankings a measure of student wellbeing, we recommend that universities include the same wellbeing, mental health, and satisfaction rankings for students, as well as faculty, as their own happiness has a bearing on that of students [92]. As mental health concerns hit their peak by age 25 [5, 6], and the implications for learning, health, and employment outcomes are significant [93], regulators must support institutions with guidelines and programming options to improve the wellbeing of students that is of an academic, psychological, social and financial nature, as much as they do for institutional effectiveness. This will force a shift in institutional mindsets away from a singular commercial interest to a more student-centered as well as student-as-customer aim, which is incidentally, what students are requesting. Students expect their psychosocial and learning needs to be met.

3. Conclusion

Our study was small in size and limited in its generalizability as it only included private universities in the UAE. Further, response bias was possible as only students who were interested in responding did so. Focus groups may have helped generate deeper insights, as well as the inclusion of older students benefiting from the passage of time. Still, our study offered insight into what non-Western students feel matters, a vital contribution to knowledge around wellbeing across both institutional and cultural contexts, where scientific inquiry continues to evolve [3, 41, 43].

Overwhelmingly, what students construe as vital to their wellbeing is not what universities typically offer [e.g., 18, 48, 52]. Beyond learning, they want connection, as well as to be seen, heard, and inspired. They want to feel as though they are doing something worthwhile with their days and enjoy themselves. They want to worry less and be helped when they do. Most of all, they did not want to flounder on their

own and feel unheard and ignored. More critically, they wanted universities to help orchestrate their psychosocial needs. This last finding supports developments in positive psychology reinforcing the need for systemic changes over singular, individual-level interventions [41, 45] and is also the foundation of positive universities [26]. Yet, that universities have a role to play in student wellbeing and that students are cognizant of that role has been difficult for institutions to grasp as many remain fixated on a purely commercial lens, or on how they feel education has been and thus, should be. Others are satisfied separating learning from existing, without realizing that these needs are one and the same. In fact, these emotional needs are also those not being met in faculty, other employees, as well as managers, senior leaders and CEO's [94] more generally.

Student wellbeing has positive outcomes that can avert mental health concerns [4–8]. However, ensuring that wellbeing needs are met can also promote social, learning, economic and employment outcomes critical not only to students and institutions, but for the nations in which these operate (e.g., [9–13, 16]). For institutions wishing to position themselves as first-choice institutions, especially relevant in contexts like the UAE where students have many local as well as international study options, attending to wellbeing as an institutional driver can maximize institutional competitiveness, fuel student and faculty recruitment, leverage academic performance and strengthen organizational outcomes, including profits, on which many depend [27–29]. Accordingly, institutions must heed the OECD's [91] advice to include wellbeing as a legitimate performance indicator and position it as a serious endeavor. In this manner, students primarily benefit, but institutions and their respective stakeholders, as well as the nations in which these operate, can as well.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author details

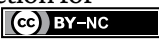
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Understanding Happiness in the Pacific Islands: A Qualitative Study with University Staff in Fiji

Annie Crookes and Meg A. Warren

Abstract

The concept of happiness has been the subject of critical analysis throughout the Western philosophical thought. Current conceptualizations focus on the role of cultural traditions and consumerist societal values. However, there is increasing scientific evidence that happiness is a product of multiple factors, the specific pattern of which differs across cultures. Yet, the cross-cultural literature tends to condense this into a *Western-individualist versus non-Western-collectivist* happiness dichotomy. This overlooks the vast diversity in global collectivist societies and more research is needed from under-represented, indigenous populations. This study aims to provide a qualitative exploration of the definitions, experiences, and outcomes of happiness within a professional sample of Indigenous Pacific Fijian and Indian-Fijian ethnic groups. The data revealed eight inter-related themes that, together, suggest the experience of happiness in Fijians is a product of collectivist cultural and religious structures, individual goals and needs, and the practical environment (housing and land systems) of the Pacific Islands. This model of happiness both supports and extends existing literature from other non-Western populations. Importantly, the mix of indigenous, colonial, and environmental influences which seem to underlie the Fijian understanding of happiness support the call for contextualized analyses and socioecological approaches to happiness and well-being research.

Keywords: happiness, well-being, qualitative, Pacific Islands, indigenous psychology

1. Introduction

The concept of happiness has been the subject of critical analysis and writing throughout the history of philosophical and scientific interest witnessed across all cultures. Within the major periods of Western thinking and sociocultural development, the question of what constitutes happiness and how it should be pursued has encountered significant shifts [1]. The earliest Western writings on happiness from ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle viewed happiness as an end goal that is and should be desired and pursued. In this conceptualisation, happiness is fundamentally an internal state achieved through processes related to contemplation, self-fulfillment and acceptance leading to a sense of peace ('psychic harmony'). In many ways this has also been reflected in psychological understanding

of happiness. For example, Maslow's hierarchy of needs indicates that optimal living (i.e. a state of happiness) comes from moving towards self-actualisation.

Greek philosophers termed happiness as 'eudaimonia' which suggests not only that it is a product of leading a virtuous life (as opposed to a pleasure-focused one) but therefore that it cannot actually be assessed as such until the end of life. In contrast, later philosophers embedded happiness as achievable during life. For example, Epicurus proposed that happiness can be experienced during life as a product of contentment with simple and meaningful things and overall quality of life (over short-term hedonic pleasures and desires) and by experiencing both positive and negative states. This has also become an important part of modern happiness theories which emphasize the role of negative emotions and events in facilitating emotional and psychological growth.

A second shift in the western conceptualisation of happiness came with the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. Prior to this, happiness had become defined within Christian worldviews as experienced through pursuing 'truth' and coming to 'know' God. For some such as St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas this would actually only happen in the after-life. The Renaissance began to re-interpret Christian doctrines such that experience of spiritual 'truth' could come from living a positive and moral life. Moreover, this could also be facilitated by positive environments, as in the concept of 'Utopia'. The Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant extended this idea of happiness interpreting it as the experience of freedom to think without religious or social doctrines, and to be able to use your own rational thinking to create a long-term positive quality of life. In addition, happiness was construed as a right and even an obligation such that one should be actively pursuing one's own happiness. This forms the basis for William James' initial psychological conceptualisation of happiness as a positive state that comes from the active participation in life and the attitude that life is worth living.

It is clear that in much of Western philosophical and psychological thinking, happiness was associated with the quality of life, balanced emotional states, and the pursuit of virtue rather than pleasure from external sources. In contrast, in the 20th century this appears to have changed at the societal level with the increasing influence consumerism and media influenced by American culture. That is, if the pursuit of happiness is something to be valued and pursued, then the expression of positive emotion (smiling, looking cheerful) became the indicator that one is indeed experiencing happiness. This has also led to advertising associating consumer products with the expression and end goal of 'being happy'. As a result, the Western socio-cultural conceptualisation of happiness has become tied to external expressions of happiness and consumerism. This is reflected in the current theoretical distinction between 'hedonic' happiness associated with Western populations and 'eudaimonic' happiness now associated predominantly with non-Western populations.

Regardless, recent scientific research suggests that there appears to be a growing shift away from Western understandings of happiness. Numerous studies have attempted to understand the nature of happiness, its antecedents, and its consequences in diverse cultural contexts. For example, Fave et al. [2] found that across Australia, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and South Africa, psychological balance and harmony were central to the lay conception of happiness, and family as well as social relations were key life domains in which happiness was experienced. This could be interpreted as an adaptation of the philosophical traditions around happiness as 'psychic harmony' and peace of mind, but with a stronger interpersonal focus.

Globally, a study in Taiwan showed sources of happiness included satisfying the need for respect, harmony of interpersonal relationships, fulfillment of material

needs, achievement at work, being at ease with life, taking pleasure at others' expense, sense of self-control and self-actualization, pleasure and positive affect, and health [3]. Likewise, in Bangladesh, relational goals and values were found to play the key role in happiness [4] while, in East Asia, positive daily experiences were more important [5]. Lomas [6] lists several cultural factors that mediate the determinants of well-being, including history, tradition, norms, values, and language. Taken together these findings could suggest that the impact of unemployment on health and well-being seen in the West (e.g. [7–9]) may actually be offset in collectivist cultures where one's role in the community and the support offered by the community is more important for one's sense of happiness. Therefore, when developing national strategies for monitoring and supporting population well-being it would be most effective to build these around a clear understanding of the constituents of well-being within the local context.

The cross-cultural research on well-being and positive psychology has also suggested that while expressions of happiness may be universally recognized [10] the term *happiness* itself may be defined differently and relate to different experiences [11, 12]. For example, among American participants it may reflect their positive emotion and mood state, while in participant groups from the East it refers to good fortune [11]. Wierzbicka [12], has argued that this semantic and conceptual difference in how the word happiness is understood (even across otherwise 'Western' European countries) makes any attempt at universal assessment of happiness less valid. Moreover, in studies of East Asians, Joshanloo [13] found that high arousal positive affective experiences were actively avoided in preference for experiencing happiness as 'cool' and 'calm'. These cultural distinctions are reflected in the two-dimensional model of happiness differentiating hedonic from eudaimonic happiness concepts [14, 15]. Moreover, the cross-cultural research has tended to summarize the differences in happiness only across the broad cultural categories of individualist (Western) and collectivist (largely non-Western). That is, hedonic happiness is seen to be prevalent in Western populations, while eudaimonic is better represented in non-Western populations [13, 16]. Moreover, 'collectivist' in this literature is itself often defined only by samples from East Asian populations [17, 18], which is in itself a gross generalization of both 'Asian' and collectivist concepts.

Given these limitations in representation, the evidence base tends to imply a relative homogeneity in conceptions of happiness in non-Western, collectivistic cultures. In contrast, the collectivist cultural category spans a vast range of different economic, political, religious, and historic contexts [19, 20]. For example, the preference for low-arousal emotions found in non-Western Asian participants was not replicated in non-Western Latin American participants [19]. This fundamental diversity within the collectivist or non-Western category may be overlooked in large-scale research findings, reducing the validity of the research conclusions. For example, Gardiner et al. [21] determined that the reliability of emic happiness measures developed specifically for collectivist (Japanese) contexts were less reliable in other collectivist countries in the Middle East and Africa. This highlights the need for nuanced research on happiness to deepen understanding beyond the somewhat superficial individualist/collectivist dichotomy and the need to broaden the cross cultural research on happiness in under-represented countries and cultural groups.

The independent countries of the Pacific Islands, which include Fiji, provide a unique context for exploring such conceptions of happiness. Populations in these small island nations are of interest because of their strong, traditional identity and faith, communal social structures, and environmental contexts. The vast geography of the

South Pacific region means that each nation is relatively culturally isolated, far more than may be the case in neighboring countries in other regions. To date, countries within the Pacific Island region (including Fiji) have tended to be only indirectly included within global psychological research with few studies engaging in specific exploration of individual Pacific Island Populations. For example, some studies make reference to a broader 'Asia Pacific' region which is variously defined as countries including Japan, China, South Korea, Philippines, Indonesia and India [22–24]. Other studies separate countries in Asia from the region of 'Oceania' which tends to be represented predominantly by New Zealand and Australia [25, 26]. However, studying native populations of the Pacific Islands provides important cultural comparisons to the 'Pacific Islander' ethnic groups reported in research from Australia, New Zealand, or the USA. That is, although Pacific people may maintain a strong cultural identity, there will likely be differences in the impact of their culture and history between where they would be minority communities within otherwise developed nations rather than indigenous populations within markedly different economic and subsistence contexts.

1.1 Happiness in the Pacific Islands region and Fiji

To date, little research has explored happiness and well-being in the Oceania-Pacific region populations beyond the developed East Asian nations such as China, and Western nations such as Australia and New Zealand. In an extensive review of the literature, Kim et al. [27] determined that of the 863 articles examined, there were 61 from the Oceania region, of which six came from New Zealand, and with none from other Pacific island nations. The World Happiness Report [28] that collates data from 156 countries also only includes New Zealand from the Pacific Island nations, with no further stratification of Pacific cultural groups. This continued to be the case in a large global survey of character strengths [29]. Young-Leslie and Moore [30] noted that the cross-cultural positive psychology literature has predominantly focused on populous nations which subsequently leaves large geographic regions of the world under-represented, including the many countries of the Pacific Islands. Yet, as a center of small, ethnically diverse groups, there could be no better place for studying cultural differences and the impact of social and cultural factors on psychology.

There are a few notable exceptions to this omission of the Pacific Islands in the study of happiness and well-being. The Pacific nation of Vanuatu has included a measure of subjective well-being within national household surveys since 2010 [31]. Associations in the survey data suggest happiness in Pacific Island populations may be driven by specific indigenous factors, such as customary land access including marine and forest resources, engagement in cultural practices and traditional knowledge, active engagement in community leadership, and positive family identity [32]. Young-Leslie and Moore [30] studied the Tongan concept of happiness using a standardized well-being questionnaire and found that positive emotions were significantly associated with traditional social functioning and kinship obligations. Further, two linguistic studies indicate indirectly that the basic *conceptualization* of happiness in Indigenous Pacific populations may be embedded in a collective interdependence with others [33, 34]. Ethnographic analyses of well-being in Pacific Island countries through language and cultural traditions have emphasized that supporting the needs of others is central to individual happiness values and that well-being has indigenous knowledge at its core [33, 34]. Further, words connected with happiness in the native Fijian language such as *Bula Taucoke* and *Sautu* (both: Well-being) inculcate the fulfillment of communal obligations and supportiveness as the foundation to individual happiness [34].

The fundamental collectivist understanding of well-being has been built into the Vanuatu happiness monitoring project which includes an assessment of *community happiness* alongside the personal ratings from individuals within these communities.

Fiji is an economically-developing country categorized as middle-income based in the Melanesian area of the South Pacific and is comprised of 300 islands. The majority of the 900,000 population live on the two main islands of Viti Levu, which hosts the capital city, Suva, and Vanua Levu. Fiji gained independence from the British in 1970, becoming a democratic nation, although since then it has experienced several political coups; the most recent of which was in 2006. There are two primary ethnic groups: the Indigenous Pacific Islanders, predominantly I-Taukei and Rotuman ethnic groups, and the Indo-Fijians, who came to Fiji as indentured laborers and professional migrants during colonization. Fijians are therefore influenced by a history of indigenous Melanesian beliefs and traditions, alongside the impact of Western colonization and South Asian migration. While Fiji does not currently undertake regular national happiness monitoring, it has received ranking in polls such as Gallup, as one of the world's happiest nations [35]. Further, the strong sense of well-being and sharing of happiness are specifically promoted as part of Fiji's national tourism industry. One example is a recent social media happiness campaign *Bulanaires* [36, 37] which uses the Fijian concept of *Bula* (Life) as seen in the common form of greeting *Bula Vinaka* (Good health) and the country's general reputation for happiness, as a basis for the global promotion of well-being initiatives.

1.2 The present study

The above discussion highlights the impact of culture on the concept and drivers of happiness for individuals, and therefore the nature of subjective well-being as it may be measured and facilitated within a country's population. Models of happiness and well-being now tend to distinguish a collectivist-eudaimonic phenomenon seen in many non-Western countries from an individualist-hedonic phenomenon seen in the west. However, the definition of collectivism in this literature lacks a recognition of the vast diversity in populations and cultures which fall under the 'non-Western, collectivist' heading. This suggests that an investigation of happiness among indigenous people from the Pacific Island nations will be important in overcoming this limitation and providing insights on happiness within a culturally unique context. In the current paper, we provide an initial exploration of the definition, experiences, and outcomes of happiness within a Fijian sample who are from the two major ethnic groups. As a first study on happiness in Fiji we draw on a sample of university staff who may be able to reflect on their understanding of happiness and how it has been influenced by internal and external factors. This may help to elucidate how the conception of happiness could be impacted by post-colonial elements through Western education and urban living, and elements that are indigenous to Pacific people, including a rural upbringing, and village communal identity and associations.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

Participants were recruited from a population of staff working at the University of South Pacific (USP) Laucala campus, located in Fiji's capital city of Suva. Participants were Fijian nationals of any ethnic background who had predominantly resided

in-country. The sample included 26 participants, 14 identifying as female and 12 as male; 14 as Indigenous Pacific Fijians (7 female, 7 male), 11 Indo-Fijians (6 female, 5 male) and 1 Chinese-Fijian (female). The participants were either academic or professional service staff and all held higher education degrees (Masters or PhD). Participants were identified using an alpha-numeric coding system with two letters referring to ethnicity (Pacific Islander, Indo Fijian, Chinese Islander) followed by a letter referring to gender (Male, Female) and a number based on order of interview.

2.2 Procedures and measures

Interview protocols and questions were discussed with a departmental cultural representative to ensure they would be understood as relevant and appropriate by Fijian participants. Ethical approval for the study was given by the research office of the University of the South Pacific.

Participants took part in semi-structured interviews lasting up to one hour either face-to-face (24 individuals) or via zoom conferencing (two individuals). The interviews covered a range of positive psychological concepts as part of a broader research project. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the primary researcher and interviewer, and then coded using online software package Quirkos. The present study primarily analyses a subset of responses from five questions surrounding happiness and life satisfaction. These questions included: “what does happiness mean to you”, “what things make you happy nowadays”, “what are some happy memories from childhood”, “is Fiji a happy place generally”, and “on a scale of 1-10 how satisfied with life are you and what gives you that score”. Respondents also described elements of their happiness or well-being as part of these responses.

2.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used because of its usefulness in analyzing rich and complex data [38]. The responses were coded over three reading cycles leading to 69 descriptive codes which were then analyzed for emergent themes and connections. The aim was to remain open to the conceptual elements emerging from the Fijian responses and consider their relationships to the indigenous culture. Based on Pratt’s recommendations [39], the data were analyzed in an iterative manner, by traveling back and forth between data and theory, with attention to how the data illustrated, expanded, or challenged past theory, illuminated theoretical gaps, or offered theoretical insights. From this analysis, eight general theme mappings were decided surrounding the concept of happiness: having just enough; contentment, peace, and relaxation; adherence to moral norms; individual growth and identity; family and community connection; collective experience; faith and religion; tradition and rural values. Each of these encompassed a network of individual codes and sub-themes. Thematic analysis and interpretation were guided by the primary aims of understanding the conceptualization of happiness experiences and the intrapersonal, social, and historic cultural factors that contribute to happiness in Fijians. In the below section, the themes are explored in the context of the participant responses and discussed within the context of established literature and theory.

2.4 Reflexivity

It is important to understand the context of the interview process and the ways in which the researcher’s own cultural experiences and background may be impacting

the responses and interpretations discussed. The interviews were conducted by the first author who is of white British ethnicity. She is a resident of Fiji, working within the same university context as the participants. As an expatriate resident, the interviewer has some understanding of the historic, cultural and religious environment of the participants and the social structures of rural communities. Also the need to be open to the multiple roles of socio-cultural and environmental factors in creating the participants perspectives. However, the different cultural background will necessarily impact the depth to which this openness can result in valid exploration and interpretation of meaning. Given this limitation, the choice was made to use university staff as participants to provide a bridge between the interviewer and participants to facilitate shared understanding of the discussion themes.

3. Findings and discussion of identified themes

The data revealed eight inter-related themes that define happiness across the Fijian participants and which combine both individual and shared/collectivist factors. Together, they suggest the conception of happiness among this sample of (educated) Fijians appears to be a product of collectivist cultural and religious structures, individual goals and needs, and the practical environment, including housing and land systems, of the Pacific Island populations.

3.1 Theme 1: happiness is *simple pleasures* and *having just enough*

At the center of this conceptualization is the value placed on reaching a stable state where basic needs have been met but not more (IFF3, CIF1, IFM2, PIF2, IFF4, PIM1, PIF1, PIM7). This stability of essential needs is evident in respondent statements such as: “(in Hindi) *there is this phrase where we talk about food, clothing, and housing so if we have all of that in the safest possible way then I think I’m quite happy*” (IFF3). Happiness as fulfillment of basic needs was also reflected in a number of responses which identified finding happiness in simple, everyday events (IFM2, PIF1, PIM7, PIM1, IFF1), and acknowledging the experience of happiness simply in everyday existence. This is evident in respondent statements, such as, “*if everything is okay in my house, my garden is weeded, clean, I come to work every day without coming across any accidents, ... when I go back home, we pray before dinner, have a good night’s sleep, that’s what to me happiness is all about*” (PIM7). In a separate response, “*if I think what made me happy throughout this day today...was it because I travelled back to Suva and was enjoying the view...the weather can make me happy... things like this*” (IFM2). The celebration of being with family members in everyday settings was also indicated by respondents as a driver for happiness, “*I sat together with my elder brothers...you know we said stories of old, we had around a bowl of kava, we were sharing... experiences, it really made us all feel happy*” (PIM7).

Importantly, the respondents indicated an inherent belief that maintaining lifestyle basics and securing *just enough* to live by, would bring greater benefit than striving for more or making upward social comparisons. That is, several respondents made specific mention of happiness *not* being found in material wealth, ambition, or individual achievement (IFM4, IFM2, IFF2, PIM2, PIF3). Supporting this belief were respondent statements that included “*the reason why I’m happy (is) because I’m not over-ambitious.... If you are over-ambitious you are never happy with what you have. You just keep wanting more and more, and more...I’m happy (with) what I have*” (IFM4).

From another respondent, *“I’m not against ambition and motivation but after a certain point you should be content with where you are. I’ve seen it with some of my friends and some colleagues because they start comparing themselves with others...they just want more and more to the stage where people have actually got a very good job with salary and benefits, and they still want control political(ly) or within a workforce...”* (PIM2). This is in specific contrast to that of Western cultural values (PIF6, PIF3). For example, in the view of a respondent who had experience within both Fijian and Western cultural settings, *“in America I was becoming very individualistic. I didn’t understand (how) as a girl I could survive with one pair of shoes here and in America I had a closet full of shoes and I thought how did I get from there to here?”* (PIF6). From the responses, there is a sense that while some level of wealth and possessions could bring benefits, this would need to be balanced against the additional stress and a reduction in personal freedom that necessarily occurs from that lifestyle (IFM1, IFM2, IFF5). This seems to contrast the Western assumption that financial wealth should enable personal freedom. For the Fijian respondents, the wealth-freedom contradiction is a reflection of the distinction between urban and rural living. For example, the accumulated wealth from professional work (in urban centers) is used to pay for housing and food not in one’s own control. This contrasts with the subsistence lifestyle of rural villages, living off the land and in self-built housing. This is described by one respondent: *“So in the sense that here you are free to generate your own resources without the rules and regulations that come with it. As opposed to being in the city you have every rule that you have to cope with in order to generate your wealth or resources”* (IFF5).

The emphasis on security and stability in meeting basic needs mirrors findings of Pflug [40] when comparing happiness beliefs across South African and German respondents. While the respondents generally followed collectivist (South African) or individualist (German) dimensions in their perspectives, the South Africans also “vigorously embraced” (p.560) material need satisfaction as the *pathway* from unhappiness to happiness and the “unequivocal means” (p.559) to well-being. Pflug [40] suggests this was due to the history of material scarcity particularly among black South Africans. Similarly, in a study by Maulana et al. [41] on Indonesian adults, the researchers found that the concept of happiness was equated to a state of “satisfaction” across 3 domains: basic needs (e.g. food, shelter and financial independence); social needs (e.g. maintaining good relationships with family and others); and positive world view. (e.g. acceptance and gratitude for where you are in life, spirituality). Interestingly, the multi-country study by Fave et al. [42] found the basis of happiness as satisfying physiological, survival needs was specifically emphasized in samples from Croatia and Mexico but not from other individualist or collectivist populations [42]. These findings suggest that the practical need to focus on basic survival in less economically-developed countries underpins both cognitive and emotional experiences such as central facets of worldview and appraisal of one’s life, goals and motivations for maintaining well-being and the circumstances under which happiness is experienced.

From the research findings, there is a subtle but interesting distinction between the Fijian responses and findings from other collectivist, lower-income countries in the existing literature. The Fijian sample placed less emphasis on *survival* domains than comparative populations, despite somewhat similar economic context. The Fijian sample, while they were working individuals, were living within the context of a developing lower middle-income country with a history of political unrest. The respondents did endorse that living a stress-free life was tied to security in basic needs for their family and community. However, the emphasis for Fijians seemed to be as

a celebration in the *virtue* of living simply, an enjoyment of the basics rather than a sense of needing to survive. In comparison, basic needs in the Indonesian sample [41] referred to material necessities such as owning a vehicle and home. In Fiji, the same references to owning a home or land seemed to be important, not for their material necessity, but *because of* their link to the state of peace and a sense of belonging. That is, satisfying basic needs, such as food and a home, is a secondary cause of happiness through their symbolic value and connection to family and identity, and *that* is the primary cause of well-being for Fijians. Potentially, there is, therefore, a complex relationship between socio-economic context, practical needs and endorsement of peace and harmony, as central elements to happiness. That subjective well-being is not directly related to economic well-being was also asserted by Sotgiu et al. [43] in a study that compared happiness determinants in older Italian and Cuban adults. It may be that mediating factors at macro-societal level or cultural aspects of religious doctrine will mediate the impact of socio-economic status (SES) on the conceptualization of happiness.

3.2 Theme 2: happiness is *calmness, contentment and contagious joy*

By placing the value of *just enough* at the center of the happiness concept, Fijian respondents experienced positive emotions with low intensity, as is also found in other collectivist populations. The emotion was described as one of stable state contentment and experiencing *calm* rather than excitement or pleasure. In essence, the respondents sought out and preferred the emotional experience of being stress-free over a state of excitement (PIF1, IFF2, CIF1, PIM5). According to one respondent, “*when I have a day off and I don’t have anything on my schedule I find that inner peace, that inner happiness*” (CIF1) and in the words of another respondent, “*Cool it. Your joy has to be....cool, respectful*” (PIM5). The emphasis on low intensity emotions also applied to negative emotions such as anger: “*if I raise my voice, then I’m not speaking the Fijian language, you are speaking a foreign language!... (if) you start raising your voice and getting angry then my grandfather will say ‘you are speaking as a foreigner!’*” (PIM5).

Happiness was also conceptualized as a cognitive state of contentment and peace, as opposed to just an emotional state (IFM5, PIF3, PIF5, PIM2). As indicated by one response, “*It’s like basically being content with where you are, even though we have goals to achieve, but just being content with your current situation*” (IFM5). According to another, “*I think it’s just a state of contentment...not necessarily an emotion because they come and go*” (PIF3). One respondent specifically differentiated the fleeting emotion of happiness with the longer-term state of joy, which they defined as contentment: “*... happiness is something that can go up and can go down depending on the situation....we look at joy as something that should always be there.... It’s like basically being content with where you are, even though we have goals to achieve, but just being content with your current situation*” (IFM4). Thus, happiness seems to be conceptualized as both, state-like and momentary as well as trait-like and stable.

The differentiation between a surface-level, happy emotion and a deeper, positive emotion defined by peace and contentment has certainly been reported in many, if not most, non-Western, collectivist cultures. For example, researchers have presented happiness as being “fragile” [44–46] as well as something to be discouraged in non-Western and Islamic-based cultures. In a review of this research, Joshanloo and Weijers [47] distinguish that in Arab and East Asian populations, extreme affective experiences are to be avoided and may even be overtly feared or handled with care [45, 46]. In alignment with these assertions were several respondent references

to experiencing both positive and negative emotions as “cool” and “calm”. Perhaps reflecting the idea that high-arousal happiness is fragile, the Fijian respondents indicated that hedonic pleasure is acceptable to experience but does not represent true happiness. That is, they differentiated the emotion of “*happy*” which is viewed as superficial or even frivolous from “*joy*” which is the emotional experience of contentment (IFM4). Joshanloo [13] reports this is also evident within traditional Hindu texts, which is understandable given the Hindu background for Indo-Fijians in the sample. Yet, unlike in Arab or East Asian cultures [45], Fijians did not claim that intense happiness should be avoided because they feared it leads to something negative, but rather, intense excitement and happiness are not the path to well-being and satisfaction with life.

Although the Fijian respondents indicated a *preference* for low-arousal emotions they did also suggest that higher-arousal, contagious positive emotions are an important part of communal values (IFM2, IFF4, PIM3, PIM5). For example, the “*Bula Smile*” mentioned by some respondents is the genuine smile of warmth and hospitality shown by Fijians to each other, and to strangers. According to a respondent, “*generally you walk down the street, people will smile at you, people will talk to you, this doesn’t happen overseas*” (IFF4). It seems that in Fiji, positive emotions produce visible facial expressions which carry positive emotional contagion and are therefore important for the sense of community (utilized within the tourism industry). This differs from happiness as a sense of contentment, which is essentially, an individual experience. Similarly, one respondent discussed the pleasure he felt when dancing (“*lose myself in dancing, just feel joy..*”, PIM2), which is akin to the hedonic dimension of happiness that is less described in non-Western cultures. However, traditional dancing in Pacific-Fijian culture, known as the *Meke*, is another important collective activity that ties people together through shared hedonic pleasure. This interpretation is also reflected in Ruby et al. [19] where the role of high-arousal, positive emotions for building social harmony within non-Western Latin American cultures is discussed.

3.3 Theme 3: happiness requires active, conscious adherence to social and moral norms

There appears to be a sense that happiness is a cognitive state of contentment as opposed to an emotional response, and achieving it necessitates active pursuit and maintenance through cognitive processes of acceptance, self-regulation, and conscious positive attitudes (CIF1, IFF2, IFM2, IFM5, PIM5). One such response declared, “*when I catch myself comparing with other people I try and stop and think well I’ve got this already... I do feel at times that I am comparing but I try and think to cut it out.*” (CIF1). Another respondent shares, “*I was complaining about everything and once I was in a very bad situation and I realised the life I’m having right now is what most of the people are dreaming for...and I realised I have to be happy in this moment. ...at that moment I was devastated but the next day when I wake up I’m like okay why was I crying? I have a good job I’m really satisfied*” (IFF2).

In some ways respondent views were similar to the *positive worldview* domain of happiness descriptions from Indonesian respondents in Maulana et al. [41] which encompassed the active cultivation of gratitude and self-acceptance. In this domain, the Indonesian descriptions regarding active gratitude included, “*By grateful means that I do not worry about things [of] something that I still don’t have, no...but by being grateful we can be more relaxed in living the life*” ([41], p. 314). This is similar to the active cognitive creation of relaxation and peace in Fijian respondents. This cognitive

evaluation of contentment was also a product of leading a moral and principled life. Indeed, from the majority of responses, living according to rules is not only a moral imperative but is itself a source of pleasure and happiness (PIM3, PIM4, PIM6, IFF3). For example, one respondent shares: *“we were always big on protocols...our sense of who we are, our identities, are established within those structures. When those are taken away a lot of Fijians found themselves kind of cut off from the moorings that they (had)”* (PIM6). This emphasis on discipline and social norms results both in the preference for lower intensity emotions, and a belief in accepting and maintaining a status quo rather than striving for change and disruption. According to another respondent, *“(during COVID) whatever was happening, I have noticed....that (the) majority (of) people were adhering to rules and regulations set, and they were quite content with whatever decisions were made and I think that is this part of happiness as well. They are happy with whatever they have instead of getting aggressive and breaking down too many rules and going out of their limits.”* (IFF3).

The understanding of happiness as a cognitive state driven by living according to religious or social structures is aligned with the dimension of eudaimonic well-being [14] often tied to collectivist cultures [48]. Within the current study, however, there are elements of both non-Western and Western approaches to happiness. For example, Joshanloo [13] has argued that eudaimonic well-being is valued in all populations but is just differently defined in the East as it is in the West. In this case, a Western eudaimonic well-being includes individualistic elements, such as self-esteem, meaning in life, mastery and control. In alignment with this, the Fijian respondents mentioned both happiness in terms of living according to traditions or religious teachings as well as a motivation for self-growth and fulfillment of personal goals. This could be a result of the present sample being drawn from a professional population within the university staff, which perhaps suggests the role of higher education as a pathway to ‘westernizing’ or indeed, continuing to colonize, indigenous populations.

Huta and Ryan [49] have argued that the two dimensions of well-being are related, rather than mutually exclusive, concepts; that eudaimonic and hedonic describe different aspects of (the same) well-being. That is, eudaimonic well-being is a process which for some may lead to positive affect, such as happiness or life satisfaction, while hedonic is the state and outcome of feeling good, more often than not [49]. In this way, eudaimonic should lead to hedonic, but may not, and hedonic can, but does not have to, come from a eudaimonic lifestyle. This combined model fits well with the descriptions of happiness from the Fijian sample where happiness was defined in terms of lifestyle, such as enjoying simple things, engaging in family, community and living according to faith and traditions, but through this the emotion of happiness would be experienced as contentment or freedom from stress.

3.4 Theme 4: happiness through personal growth that also serves others

Several respondents linked their sense of inner peace to an emphasis on pursuing self-growth and personal fulfillment (IFF5, IFM1, PIF2, PIF6). This is evident in statements from respondents, such as: *“it’s about achieving but not telling yourself that you are done with achieving... A human being is never complete, life is a process; my understanding of accomplishment is that it is never complete”* (IFM1). In addition, *“It’s important...to be able to be positive and move forward and grow; we all want to - it’s about growing in(to) whatever you want to grow in(to).”* (IFF5).

The mention of self-growth, and individual achievement and goals could be interpreted as a reflection of the western-educated, professional participants engaged in this study. However, autonomy and personal accomplishment are core elements of both the PERMA [50] and Self-Determination Theory [51] of well-being which have been applied across cultures [52]. In particular, Lambert and Pasha-Zaidi [53] determined that both internal motivations, including personal accomplishment, and external motivations, such as accomplishment to please the family, existed in the collectivist United Arab Emirates. It is interesting that the pursuit of mastery and achievement mentioned by the Fijian sample exists alongside an otherwise strong value placed on acceptance and contentment with their life situation. There is therefore a sense in the Fijian sample that one should be both content and accepting of where one is in their life, while at the same time, strive to achieve personal goals and growth. When one respondent was asked about this (IFM4), the explanation was that one should be accepting of their individual place in the community but should still aim for achievement as a way to push the community as a whole forward. As such, the pursuit of individual achievement here is understood to serve a communal role, and happiness is derived from that shared growth.

The researchers Huta and Ryan [49], and Kasser and Ryan [54] tie well-being to intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Eudaimonic happiness is living according to what is intrinsically worthwhile to individual well-being, while hedonic happiness is pursuing socially-oriented goals, such as fame, wealth and social image. Intrinsically worthwhile pursuits identified by Fijian participants in this study were personal growth, affiliation and intimacy, contribution to the community, and physical health. These intrinsic pursuits were reflected by the Fijian respondents' descriptions of happiness and some even made direct contrasts with Western extrinsic ideals of wealth and materialism. However, again, the Fijian drivers of happiness were less exclusive as they also placed a value on social recognition. For example, when asked how one would know someone had lived an optimal life, several respondents mentioned the sentiment "*how many people are at the funeral*" (IFM4, PIM5) and, "*if people don't visit your house then... you are not rich*" (PIF4). This suggests that social recognition, by way of respect or recognition of one's giving within the community, is part of an intrinsic, eudaimonic conception of happiness in communal societies with hierarchical social structures such as in Fiji.

3.5 Theme 5: happiness as fundamentally oriented to family and community

The internal beliefs and attitudes of respondents shown here are a product of social and cultural structures which act to maintain the cognitive and emotional state of calm and contentment. Chief among these was the cultural focus on family and social connection which was described as an experience of happiness from *just being with* family members, and the act of maintaining social connections, in and of itself (PIF7, PIF1, IFF3, IFM5, IFF6, IFM1). In the view of one respondent, "*I believe that most Fijians are happy when they have that connection. When they are in their group, that larger relative group, whether it's an extended family, whether it's their clan, their village, or whether it's their province.*" (PIF7). In addition, the collectivist nature of Fijian culture also helps to bring personal inner peace through a sense of being valued and supported by family, and a sense of belonging. According to a participant, "*being close to home, where you belong, being appreciated and being comfortable; being close to where I am ... respected ... as well, being close to my family and loved ones*"

(IFF3). In the view of another respondent, *“my husband is always (saying) like every time you go to your family you’re so excited, you are totally another person and I say yes, because over there I can be myself. I can joke, I can interact and it’s people that I want to be with”* (PIF7).

Social needs are widely regarded as the universal cornerstone of well-being, happiness, and flourishing [42, 55]. However, there can be subtle differences in how interpersonal happiness itself is defined across cultures. Lu and Gilmour [17] in a study of China and the USA, and Kwan et al. [56] in their study of participants from Hong Kong and the USA, found that both US and Asian respondents emphasized the need for positive social relationships in their experience of happiness. However, the Asian definitions, but not those of the US, were reflective of a sense of interdependence and social harmony rather than social engagement to fulfill individual needs. As an exception were the Indonesian respondents in the study by Maulana et al. [41] where participants described the role of family in what could be interpreted as individual needs with descriptors including “nice communication with family” or “moral support from family” or “family as a source of personal life lessons and values.” In the present study, the Fijian respondents showed indications of both these interpretations: the mention of family as a support mechanism, bringing a sense of stability and peace, and as valuing social harmony, and also, as a source of a more direct affective experience of bonding, belonging and attachment.

3.6 Theme 6: happiness as a collective experience

Respondents appeared to suggest that happiness is a product of the collective well-being; that one simply could not experience personal happiness without also seeing the happiness, at least with respect to basic needs met, of others (PIM5, PIF1, PIF4, PIM6, PIF6, IFF1, IFF6, IFM3). On this belief, respondent statements included: *“happiness for an individual, you put that individual within the cultural or traditional context it has to do with this communal togetherness, it’s not really something like when you exercise individuality in the Western world, it has to do with being together and (behaving) in line with expected norms of a given sub-clan, within a clan, within a tribe, within a district, within a province. It goes to all those levels.”* (PIM5). Additionally, *“Happiness to me is the feeling of satisfaction, like, I’m satisfied that my family is ok, I’m ok...I feel content if my family is happy and I’m happy, that’s my definition of happiness”* (PIF4). The collectivist dimension of culture puts an emphasis on helping, sharing, and caring for each other. For the respondents in this study, this meant that even when personal sacrifice was necessary, individuals still described themselves as happy from seeing the net happiness of the family or community. One respondent identified, *“you start contributing towards your family, parents, so we also have to take that aspect, okay now I’ve graduated we need to help the parents because they have done everything for us”* (IFM3). According to another study participant, *“I’ll get a lot of happiness if I have a lot of impact upon those above, the elders, and those my age, and those who are much younger... I feel happy whenever I go to my village and I’m able to carry out community awareness programs”* (PIM5).

The sense of happiness as a collective experience, or one that is fundamentally a response to communal outcomes, supports the Pacific Island region assessment of happiness, as proposed by the Vanuatu national happiness projects [32]. Importantly, this would move beyond the role of relationships within current models of happiness. While it is already established that an individual’s happiness is a product of their

experience of connection to others in the community, in the Pacific region, an individual's happiness is a product of the community's happiness itself. This also reflects the Pacific region's cultural collectivism in which one's connection to the community is fundamental to one's identity and experience of self [57]. Another aspect of collective well-being is the role of obligation or duty either to be an active participant in collective support or to be happy as a duty to the overall well-being. Chen and Davey ([58], also [13]) discuss how well-being concepts of East Asians involve one's ability to fulfill a social role or obligation, and that striving for contentment is seen as a religious duty. The Fijian participants also described the importance of fulfilling obligations to family, or *Vanua*, meaning home or community. This was not, however, seen as burdensome but rather, a personal choice to achieve contentment. For the former, one respondent recognized hedonic pleasure, "*if you...see family as an obligation...I would just pity you because you don't know what you are missing out on!*" (PIF7). In the view of another respondent, "*some people who don't have a lot of other obligations you wonder what is driving them?*" (PIM2).

3.7 Theme 7: the role of faith and religious involvement

Overall, the responses suggest that structural elements of Fijian society, particularly those elements that exist within rural areas, are an important basis for individual well-being and happiness. One example is the strong foundation and involvement in organized religion and religious teachings, beyond individual spirituality (PIM5, IFF6, IFM5). This facet was evident in responses such as: "*I'm actually fortunate to be in that (church) group because it made me the person with moral values. I was able to judge what is right and what is wrong...And I made good decisions.*" (IFF6). Further, some respondents asserted that religious faith leads to a sense that '*God is in control*' of one's overall circumstances and future. This type of response brings a sense of security and stability to the believer, which may then allow the individual to find acceptance and contentment in their own circumstances or challenges. This may also be used as a coping mechanism to restore a sense of well-being when faced with trauma or difficulties. One respondent observes, "*knowing that god is in control and I don't have to really worry about things. That's why I'm joyful most of the days ...no matter what happens it will happen for the good*" (IFM5). Additionally, "*if you are grounded in your spirituality and relationship with God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, he will see that you get through and as long as you have Him you will be okay.*" (IFM5).

Religious involvement and community set-up are both tied to an inherent value placed by respondents on living according to discipline, rules, and social norms. Joshanloo [13, 48] gives a general discussion of happiness in non-Western cohorts as less agentic or something that can or should be actively pursued. This is somewhat in contrast to the global quantitative data analyzed by Haller and Hadler [59] which indicates that globally, happiness is associated with greater personal freedoms and agency. The Fijian sample again showed a mixture of both of these views. Particularly among the I-Taukei men, finding happiness was tied to living in accordance with religious teachings, as well as traditional social structures and rules. Further, this cohort believed that happiness came from putting faith in God as being in control. However, Fijian respondents also declared that happiness needed to be actively created by the self, as analyzed in Themes three and four.

3.8 Theme 8: happiness tied to traditional living, environment and identity

Another macro-level element that underlies the Fijian concept of happiness is the community setup of housing, particularly in rural village communities. Many respondents had experience living in a rural setting, despite their current dwelling being in an urban setting. Several respondents made reference to their perceptions of greater happiness experienced by rural village-dwelling Fijians compared to those in the modern urban areas (IFM4, PIF4, PIF5). According to one respondent, *“I think it’s the sharing and caring nature that is part of the upbringing because ... the land belongs to everybody, if you are passing by it’s just natural to say ‘hey come and have a cup of tea’, it doesn’t mean that you have to go there, it doesn’t mean that that person will come over...That’s the way they’re brought up...only recently you see fences (around homes) coming up, but always (before) there would be no fences, everyone is allowed everywhere so it’s not like this is mine.”* (IFM4). In another response, *“a communal way of living and communal ownership I will say is a lot of happiness. Just to share and to know ... that if something happened you could pull your resources together to help each other.”* (PIF5).

The historic practical necessity to share resources and depend on each other when living in remote, subsistence-based villages has effectively evolved into a perceived prosocial trait of sharing and connection that underlies the experience of happiness. Aknin et al. [60] asserted that all humans derive emotional benefit from prosocial spending and giving financially to others. In the context of rural Fiji, the idea of sharing resources, purchasing food for others, and giving back financially to the village is embedded in the social fabric, and is even made necessary by the remote geographies of some of the villages. This is an example of how the positive well-being and happiness of Fijians is embedded within the practical and traditional aspects of Fijian rural living.

There is a societal construct in Fiji known as *Vanua*. This is the concept of *home* which encompasses both extended family and the land itself and is a fundamental element of how Fijians self-identify. While *Vanua* is an I-Taukei word and stems from the indigenous Fijian history, the sense of identification with the land was evident among responses from both the I-Taukei and the Indo-Fijian study participants (IFF3, IFF5, PIM5, PIM4). This may be due to both ethnic groups having a history within Fiji of residing in rural, farming or fishing villages. In this way, happiness is derived from a connection with the land both as a resource and therefore, provider of security, and also as an entity that has shaped the ability to accept and be content with what one has. This is described by one respondent, *“we have realised that we are living in this smaller part of the world and this is what is going to facilitate and provide us with our needs. And to some extent with our wants as well... Of course, people at times get aggressive about land issues, but then the extent of conflict doesn’t go to wars and blood and all that so people still ... know this is what we have and let’s make the best of it.”* (IFF3). The notion within the Fijian understanding that happiness is, in part, tied to the land is also reflected in Theme 1 with regards to happiness as coming from meeting basic needs and simple, everyday occurrences. Within Theme 1, a number of respondents made reference to enjoyment as associated with the land. In those responses were mention of gardening and growing food (PIM7), the weather (IFM2), walking and exploring the land around the community (IFM4), and owning land in a location that would bring happiness (e.g. by the beach: PIM1).

4. Overview and contributions of the findings

The present study provides an initial exploration of the conceptualization and determinants of happiness among Fijians from the college-educated, professional population. Respondent descriptions suggest a conceptualization of happiness which reflects and begins to extend global models of happiness and well-being, and how these are distinct across different collectivist contexts. The Fijian respondents described a psychological state of contentment and peace as well as the need for harmony and balance as central to the idea of happiness. In addition, there was a clear emphasis on activities which promoted contextual or social domains of community, such as extended family engagements, active involvement in church activities, and the description of happiness stemming from 'simply being with family'. These broadly align to findings from similar qualitative studies in Germany and South Africa [40], Taiwan and the USA [3], the USA, Canada and El Salvador [61], and the USA and China [17] in that more collectivist populations tend to define happiness in interpersonal and social harmony terms. Similarly, the large scale quantitative cross-cultural comparisons of Fave et al. [2, 42] on lay definitions of happiness determined that the concept descriptions fell into two domains: contextual or social, encompassing family, friends and relationships, and psychological, including inner harmony and peace, with the latter being prominent in non-Western, collectivist cultures.

However, there were also elements of the responses specific to Fijian history and traditions which are clearly shaping happiness and the experience of well-being. Despite being a middle-income country in terms of economics, Fijian community structures seem to provide a natural protective factor that enables a maintenance of well-being and satisfaction with life despite the challenging environment. For example, among the indigenous Fijians, the concepts of *Vanua*, describing one's native land community, and *Matagali*, a structured community group with shared land ownership, are important components of well-being. Although the present paper does not review these concepts in detail, for the purposes of the present discussion, it is clear that the connection to a *Matagali* creates a vertical collectivism and conformity that would promote the ideals of low-intensity emotions, maintaining harmony above all else, and working to support the needs of the community. In addition, the concept of *Vanua*, as a physical, relational, and spiritual home allows for happiness to come from simple entities including land, relationships, and contentment. Similar values were also reflected by the Indo-Fijian respondents, whose history in the Pacific is tied to labor migration, both indentured and free, and who do not have overt *Matagali* traditions. This may be due to a need to find community identity and political strength, with similar social systems developed to emphasize extended family and to thrive in rural village life. This also indicates the fundamental role of the practical environment of remote island nations in driving social structures and lifestyles which, in turn, become components of identity and well-being. Finally, the role of religion, both Hinduism and Christianity, is clear from almost all respondents. It is of interest that particularly among native Pacific Fijians, the strong involvement in Christian denominations is not indigenous but a product of the political history of colonialism. This again indicates that the unique political history of a collectivist country may also have influenced current lifestyle and cultural beliefs, and subsequently, components of happiness and well-being.

4.1 Limitations and conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate potentially unique components of happiness in Fiji which has been indicated in the findings and therefore provides a valuable starting point for further systematic investigations. However, these findings should be considered in light of some limitations. The respondents were university staff currently living in the capital city which may impact the generalizability of their responses. Although they represent a range of childhood settings including remote and rural communities, it is likely that their views are now representative of the 'westernized' urban-based Fijians than those residing in village settings. Furthermore, the themes identified and discussed here were broadly seen across all respondents and the study did not aim to specifically explore gender or ethnic group differences. Indeed, the impact of traditional gender roles, which are prominent in traditional Fijian society, may have been minimized in this sample due to the professional working status of the female participants. Therefore, future research will need to consider how different socio-environmental factors moderate the happiness themes identified (as seen in [62]).

In summary, the concepts of happiness and well-being described by the Fijian respondents both support and extend the developing understanding of happiness and pathways to well-being as it manifests differently across the world, and in particular, among non-Western populations. The mix of indigenous, colonial, and environmental influences has uniquely impacted the Fijian understanding of happiness which supports the call for a more socioecological as opposed to a simply cross-cultural approach to psychological understanding [20]. The study also supports the importance of research on understudied populations and, in particular, the need to differentiate non-Western cultures beyond simple individualist or collectivist categories [19]. It also supports the call for a more 'contextualised analysis of well-being' [41] through qualitative, in-depth studies of different cultures.

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this chapter.

Author details

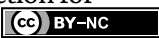
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Factors Affecting the Happiness of Korean University Students

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Abstract

As of 2020, in Korea, as 72.5% of high-school graduates go on to college and college period has an impact on the social development of Korean youth, it is very important to increase the sense of happiness of college students. However, there are new terminologies to express the situation in which how young people in Korea feel the difficulties in their lives, such as “Hell Chosun, 88-Dollar-Generation, N-Give-up-Generation, and Spoon-Social-Rank.” This chapter summarizes the factors related to the happiness of college students in South Korea, such as depression, interpersonal relationships, and self-efficacy, to suggest educational programs to promote the happiness of young people in Korea.

Keywords: happiness, university student, life satisfaction

1. Introduction

Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea proudly stipulates and guarantees the right to pursue happiness, stating that “everyone has the right to pursue happiness.” However, the reality is not so easy because young Koreans living in the flood of the word “happiness” do not feel happy. Statistics Korea [1, 2] surveyed and announced the happiness level of college students, and college students scored 6.1 points out of 10, lower than China with 7.5 points, the United States with 7.2 points, and Japan with 6.2 points. In Korea, welfare policies for young people are insufficient, and the social awareness that efforts should be made to increase the happiness of young people is relatively low [3]. The results of a survey conducted by Dong-A Ilbo and Job Korea on 607 young people aged 20–29 from March 5 to 19, 2021 found out how difficult times young people are having with depression and frustration amid the recent COVID-19 crisis. A total of 501 people (82.5%) answered that they usually experience depression or frustration, and 51.3% of them cited the difficulty in finding employment as the biggest reason.

As 72.5% of high-school graduates in 2020 [4] went on to university, most young people in their 20s in Korea can be said to be college students. However, young people using expressions, such as “Hell Chosun, 88 Dollar Generation, N-Give-up Generation, and Spoon Social Rank Theory” show a sense of despair rather than happiness. It is said to be the most prosperous economic environment since King Dangun (the legendary founder of Korea), but the reality that young people feel is not so [5].

“Hell Chosun” is a new Internet term in Korea that became famous in the 2010s [6]. It is a compound word of “Hell” and “Chosun,” meaning “Korea is close to hell and there is no hope at all.” It also has the meaning of “Korea is a bad country to live in, comparable to hell.”

The term 880,000 Won Generation is derived from the title of the book by Woo and Park [7] and is an expression that refers to the generation of young people who live or plan to live as non-regular workers. According to the authors’ analysis, in 2007, people earning about 880,000 won in their 20s were likely to become non-regular workers, so this term was given. This is a term that expresses the economic situation of Italian youth and is reminiscent of the novel “Thousand Euro Generation” (Milleuristi), published in 2005.

N-Give-up Generation is a neologism that refers to the generation of people who have given up N things. It started with the first 3-Things-Give-up generation and expanded to the “N-Things-Give-up generation.” 3-Things-Give-up generations are those who have given up on three things, dating, marriage, and childbirth, and 5-Things-Give-up generations are those who have given up on five things, including home and career [8].

“Spoon Social Rank Theory” refers to the idea that individuals in a country can be classified into different socioeconomic classes according to their parents’ wealth and income levels, and as a result, success in an individual’s life is entirely born from a wealthy family. This theory is believed to have originated from the famous English idiom “Born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth.” This means “to be born in a wealthy environment” or “to be born with good luck.” In the past, European aristocrats often used silver bowls, and nannies could use silver spoons to feed their children to know the wealth of the family [9].

Four out of five young people answered that they had ever thought of wanting to leave Korea. It is said that young people who should be the driving force for national growth and development want to leave the country where they were born and raised. This is the opinion of young people who account for 81% of the respondents [10]. Jeong et al. [10] surveyed 1003 young people aged 18 to 30 in 2017. The following is the reason why there have been times when you have thought of wanting to leave Korea (**Table 1**).

	Total	Gender	
	Total	Male	Female
Competitive and authoritative social atmosphere	32.1	31.4	33.0
Anxiety about the future that does not seem to get better no matter how hard you try	24.2	22.0	27.3
Relative deprivation felt due to social polarization	14.7	14.7	14.7
Discriminatory practices based on academic background, gender, etc.	10.1	7.6	13.7
Total	81.1	75.7	88.7

Source: [10], p. 32.

Table 1.
Reasons for wanting to leave Korea (%).

University life was not easy due to COVID-19, etc., and finding a job is becoming more difficult. It can be said that it is a matter of national importance to improve the living conditions of college students during a special period and their happiness and satisfaction.

2. Living conditions of Korean university students

Looking at the change in the population aged 15–24 including college students in the “Special Estimate of the Future Population” of the Statistics Korea [2], the ratio continues to fall. It is expected to account for 12.7% of the total population in 2017, 11.3% in 2019, 9.1% in 2025, 8.6% in 2030, and 7.1% in 2050.

In 2020, the average sleep time for adolescents (9–24 years old) on weekdays was 8 hours and 20 minutes. The average sleep time for each age group on weekdays was 9 hours 13 minutes for 9–12 years old, 8 hours 4 minutes for 13–18 years old, and 8 hours for 19–24 years old. In 2020, the employment rate of the youth (ages 15–29) is 42.2%, and the unemployment rate is 9.0%. The employment rate by age group was 6.6% for those aged 15–19, 41.1% for those aged 20–24, and 67.6% for those aged 25–29. In 2020, the proportion of employed people in their 20s by occupation is 28.2% for professionals and related workers, 22.1% for office workers, and 15.2% for service workers. In 2019, the average wage of 20–24-year-olds increased by 7.7% from the previous year to 2,152,000 won, and the average wage of 25–29 years old was 2,583,000 won, 4.7% from the previous year. 64.0% of 19–24-year-olds had part-time work experience [4].

In 2020, the average weekly internet time for teenagers was 27.6 hours, and for those in their 20s was 29.5 hours. The main purpose of using the Internet is education and learning for teenagers and acquisition of data and information in their twenties. In 2020, adolescents (ages 9–24) responded that school life had changed negatively, and family relationships had changed positively due to COVID-19. In 2020, 46.0% of youth (ages 9–24) answered that their academic stress increased due to COVID-19. The 19–24-year-olds answered that they had the most troubles in the order of job (40.3%), study (16.9%), and physical and mental health (9.4%). Most of the 19–24-year-olds consulted with friends or colleagues (49.0%), followed by consulting with their mother (19.6%), and solving problems on their own (17.7%) [4].

3. Analysis of the effect on the happiness of Korean college students

As academic interest in happiness increased from the 1960s, scholars’ early attention focused on indicators, such as age, gender, ethnicity, income, residential density, and environmental pollution level as factors affecting happiness. However, sociodemographic variables have limitations in explaining the subjective happiness of individuals because the variance of these demographic factors to explain happiness is not very high, for about 15%, and happiness is subjectively experienced by an individual in life. Therefore, recently, studies on psychological factors that affect individual happiness have been actively conducted [11, 12].

In research on happiness, various terms like happiness have been dealt with depending on the researcher. “Subjective well-being” is a concept that reflects positive aspects as well as the absence of negative aspects. It is similar to the meaning of the reflected subjective well-being [12, 13].

As a sociodemographic factor affecting happiness, the degree of happiness was found to vary according to gender [14, 15]. Also, there are studies that economic level [16, 17], grade [18], etc., influence happiness. The level of happiness was different by health condition [15, 16] and by living area [17].

Korean young people go through a huge war for entrance exams and their quality of life is very low. According to data from Statistics Korea [4], the problem that 13–18-year-olds are most concerned about is “study and grades (46.5%),” indicating that academic stress is severe. Academic stress appears not only in Korea but also in all students living in Asian countries, such as Japan, Singapore, China, and Hong Kong, which have a culture that values achievement motivation highly. This phenomenon occurs because the amount of study is excessive and the expectations for academic results are high [19]. If this is because this period is ahead of the huge gateway of entrance exams for students, can college students who succeeded in entrance exams be relatively free from academic stress? If college students’ academic stress is not properly managed, their confidence is lowered and ultimately acts as a factor that negatively affects their sense of well-being [16, 20].

Another factor influencing happiness is interpersonal skills. Interpersonal relationships are a basic human need, and since the satisfaction of life is improved through the satisfaction of these basic needs, smooth interpersonal relationships are viewed as a key element of happiness [21, 22]. Interpersonal ability refers to the comprehensive ability of an individual to develop relationships with other people in his or her life in various areas. Lee et al. [23] and Jung [16] studied where the sense of happiness experienced by college students really comes from. When considering the aspects of relationships and happiness comprehensively, it was confirmed that the relationship with others, that is, the sense of bonding, is a factor that promotes happiness. Kwon [24] stated that college students had a high sense of self-efficacy in school life and friendly relationship with the state and that the higher the emotional support from the people around them, the higher the degree of feeling of happiness. From the above studies, being able to learn how to be interested in and relate to others plays an important role in being happy. In Lee’s study [12], “Strive for Relationships” is mentioned as a factor of college students to be happy and real response of a student is as below:

I cannot be happy alone. If life becomes meaningful and I am remembered as a precious being to others more than ‘I am precious to me,’ I think it will contribute to a successful and happy life. To do that, you need to form an amicable, prudent, and sincere human relationship (a student).

As a result of the study on the relationship structure between personality and happiness, there was a very close correlation between the relationship between personality and happiness. Among the sub-factors of the five personality factors, sincerity, openness, extraversion, and affinity were particularly closely correlated with happiness, and neuroticism was found to have a negative correlation [25]. Jun & Shin [5] investigated the influence of five personality factors (initiative, depression, consideration, accuracy, and judgment), which showed that depression is the most influencing factor that impacts negatively on the college students’ happiness, and initiative and consideration positively affect the happiness of college students. They used data from 5283 university students among 8485 data from the third year of the Korean Education & Employment Panel (KEEP) II [26] provided by the Korea Vocational Training Institute. In addition to personality factors, the study shows that

self-understanding and self-efficacy are important factors affecting college students' happiness.

Park & Lee [25] also gave the results that belief about one's abilities affect happiness. The results of this study show that to enhance the happiness of college students, analyzing, understanding, and evaluating positively our personalities make our lives with more happiness. Many studies on happiness have revealed that there is a positive correlation between happiness and self-esteem [27, 28]. It has been shown that optimism influences happiness by directing one's behavior and life direction in a positive direction. Lee [12] analyzed the students' essays about how to try to be happy college students and the first category is "self-satisfaction and positive thinking."

4. Research on life satisfaction of college students

Life satisfaction is an important factor for a healthy life. In the context of Korea, the satisfaction of college students¹ after completing severe entrance examinations is important for healthy college life, academic achievement, and successful career development. The construct of "satisfaction with life" represents the cognitive component of subjective well-being [30]. Pavot and Diener [30] defined life satisfaction as "a judgment process in which an individual evaluates his or her quality of life based on his or her own criteria." Hence, evaluation of life satisfaction is based on a cognitive appraisal of the overall quality of a person's life, based on self-selected standards [31].

Studies report that demographic variables (e.g., gender and socioeconomic status) appear to play a very modest role in relation to life satisfaction in adolescents [32]. Studies that have found gender differences generally report that boys score higher on life satisfaction than girls [33]. Life satisfaction is a central construct in relation to other emotional, social, and behavioral constructs [32]. There is a moderate effect of socioeconomic status, including income and educational level, on life satisfaction [34, 35].

Among the factors influencing life satisfaction, there are self-concept and self-esteem, especially for adolescents and early adult college students. According to Dubois and Tevendale [34], self-esteem is a psychological vaccine that can protect against all kinds of developmental problems [34]. Indeed, many studies on self-esteem have shown that it significantly affects life satisfaction and mental health [35]. The self-concept is an individual's view of oneself and is called self-esteem. In other words, self-esteem is an individual's judgment of how valuable "I am." One of the self-concepts is a sense of self-identity in which one realizes who they are, and it has been reported that those whose self-identity is not established have a higher score for depression [36]. The relationship between self-esteem and depression has been extensively studied in health research over the past decade [37, 38]. Self-esteem, depression, and self-identity are closely related to each other.

Depression is another critical issue in the lives of college students. Depressed college students feel low self-worth and negatively evaluate themselves, which damages their self-esteem. Depression refers to a state of mind that has a negative impact on the overall daily life from thinking, attitude, perception, and cognition to interpersonal relationships. Depression is accompanied by various psychological problems, and painful emotional reactions, such as frustration, guilt, worthlessness, loneliness, and hopelessness, leading to negative and pessimistic thoughts, and furthermore to

¹ This section is based on Jun & Jung [29].

self-deprecation and suicidal thoughts, where they consider themselves incompetent, inferior, and worthless [39]. Depression experienced by college students varies from mild depression to severe psychotic conditions that interfere with their daily lives [37–39].

Low socioeconomic status (SES) has been found to be associated with a higher prevalence of depression. According to a meta-analysis conducted by Lorant et al., a low socioeconomic status was found to be related to the prevalence of depression [40]. In a study on the association between depression and socioeconomic status in Korea, Cho et al. reported a result from a nationwide sample analysis that was like those of the previous studies in foreign countries [41]. Kang and Ji [42] categorized self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience as positive psychological capital, and all were found to be factors affecting depression. Among the four factors of positive psychological capital, self-efficacy was found to be the most influential factor. From these results, the lower the self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, the higher the perception of depression among college students.

It is necessary to pay attention to the positive psychological state of trying to solve the current difficulties and look at the future with a positive perspective. Positive psychological factors refer to a positive psychological state of an individual to perform well in each task and achieve successful results [43]. It is not innate but can be changed with effort, so it is a psychological factor that changes an individual's attitude and affects behavioral results [43]. Therefore, if a positive psychological state is maintained, we can be mentally and physically healthy and achieve the expected performance in the work given to us [44]. On the other hand, there is a need to decrease the negative psychological state.

Jun and Jung [29] identify the factors affecting life satisfaction of Korean college students, using the data from the Korea Children's Youth Panel Survey (KCYPS) conducted by the Korea Youth Policy Institute. The KCYPS was conducted in 2010 to identify the growth and developmental patterns of children and adolescents. A total of 7071 samples from 16 provinces including first-year students, fourth-grade students, and first-year students at middle school were selected using multi-level cluster sampling method. In this study, there were first-year college students in 2016 who were first-year middle school students in 2010. Among the 2351 samples extracted, the last 1220 questionnaires were used for the final analysis, excluding the missing questionnaires in the questionnaire response related to this study.

The demographic characteristics of the survey subjects are 575 (47.1%) male and 645 (52.9%) female students. Looking at the family's economic level as reported by the college students themselves, 233 (19.1%) have good living, 781 (64.0%) were average, and 206 (16.9%) answered not good enough. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the effects of positive and negative psychological variables on life satisfaction. There are four factors (self-esteem, ego-resilience, self-identity, and life satisfaction) in the category of positive domain and four factors (attention deficit, aggression, depression, and social withdrawal) in the negative domain.

First, the level of explanations of self-esteem, attention deficit, and depression was 46.5% ($r^2 = 0.465$), and this regression model was statistically significant ($F = 353.866$, $p < 0.001$). To grasp the relative influence, the standardization coefficients were found to be depression (-0.338), self-esteem (0.302), and self-resilience (0.174). The higher the level of self-esteem and self-resilience, and the lower the degree of depression, the more influence on life satisfaction. Tolerance and VIF statistics were checked to identify multicollinearity problems. As a result,

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>á</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)		1.640	.157		10.437	.000
Life Satisfaction	Self-esteem	.384	.037	.302	10.411	.000
Life Satisfaction	Depression	-.355	.029	-.338	-12.374	.000
Life Satisfaction	Self-resilience	.255	.036	.174	7.129	.000
R ² = .466 ΔR ² = .465 F = 353.866 (p = .000)						

Table 2.
 Factors affecting the increase of life satisfaction of college students by multiple regression analysis.

the tolerance value was less than 1.0, the VIF value was less than 10, and the Durbin-Watson value was 1.912, which was close to 2 so it did not have the problem of multicollinearity (**Table 2**).

The life satisfaction of college students was negatively related to depression, and depression was closely related to aggression. To increase life satisfaction, depression is reduced. At this time, as a program to reduce depression, self-esteem or self-resilience can be increased. Rosenberg [45] defined self-esteem as an individual's set of thoughts and feelings about his or her own worth and importance. This definition reflects the notion of "global" or "general" self-esteem or self-worth. Self-esteem is a large part of college students' self-understanding and is likely to be a fluctuating and dynamic construct, susceptible to internal and external influences during early adulthood. According to Pavot and Diener [30], both self-esteem and life satisfaction indicate one's global evaluations. As in previous studies, when this study found out that self-esteem is the factor that mostly affects the life satisfaction of university students, in the future, universities will be able to develop and proceed with programs to increase students' self-esteem.

Student's college period is an intermediate stage of transition from childhood to adulthood, and various experiences are made according to the developmental changes. In addition, it is known that internalizing problems, such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal, and externalizing problems, such as aggression and delinquency, occur when the developmental task is not successfully performed during the development process [46]. In other words, it is predicted that the internalizing problem behavior of social withdrawal in college students directly affects the externalizing problem behavior of aggression and lowers life satisfaction [47].

5. Conclusion

How will the youth living in Korea be expressed? Most people fully project the positive image of the word youth. It is thought that young people should be full of challenges and passion, and the young people themselves are familiar with words, such as passion, ambition, will, and youth. However, the way young Koreans are living is very different from the positive image we have in mind. Negative words, such as "loser," "work-worm," "consumables," "sigh," and "in the same place" were suggested [10].

Korean university students are currently going through difficult times due to low employment rates amid many social turbulences. Most of them prepare for

employment during 4 years of college, and they have a lot of preparation period after graduation. To improve the employment rate of university students, the government reorganizes the university curriculum and policy to foster departments with good employment opportunities.

Research on happiness was hardly studied before 2000, and it started to increase rapidly around 2000. This trend can be said to reflect the social reality around 2000 when Koreans were interested in well-being and focused on efforts and methods to be happy. However, as studies on happiness are still focused onto confirming relationships of variables, there is a limit to the role of research on happiness in helping people more accurately understand happiness and promoting happiness. To make happiness a reality for people and help people live a happy life, the study of happiness suggests, based on the existing research results, what factors should be interested in to become happy and how best to work to promote those factors [12].

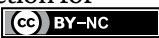
Young people living in the twenty-first century want to make a living doing what they love. Nearly 30% of young people answered that they have a successful life when they are doing what they love, that is, self-actualization and self-fulfillment. A happy and harmonious family (27.2%) ranked second, and economic success (22.9%) ranked third. We hope that our country will become a country where college students and young people become happy.

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Psychosocial Factors Associated with Happiness

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Raina V. Lamade and Katherine J. Goulden*

Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of psychosocial factors associated with happiness. Using an ecological framework, we will begin with a discussion of broad-based cultural factors and move downward to social and individual level psychological factors. This includes social support, interpersonal relationships, and psychological factors such as personality characteristics and cognitive factors. The relationship between finding meaning, posttraumatic growth, and happiness will be discussed.

Keywords: psychosocial factors and happiness, personality, posttraumatic growth, culture, interpersonal relationships and happiness, purpose and happiness, finding meaning

1. Introduction

Scholars and psychologists, from Aristotle to Seligman, have sought to define happiness [1]. Aristotle's exploration of what comprised a good, meaningful life has informed modern theories and definitions about well-being and happiness [2]. Happiness is conventionally known as a positive emotion that includes feelings of joy, contentment, and meaning [3]. Social psychologists have refined the definition of happiness because the literature has historically used the terms happiness and well-being interchangeably [3, 4]. Happiness is now best understood and achieved through an individual experiencing positive emotion, engagement, and meaning in their life [5, 6]. Some studies continue to use subjective well-being, which is defined as a combination of high positive affect, low negative affect, and life satisfaction, as the primary measure of happiness [7, 8]. Achieving, experiencing, and maintaining happiness are impacted by cultural, psychological (e.g., personality traits), and social (e.g., relationships) factors as well as a complex interaction between them [9]. Happiness and well-being are significantly influenced by culture which provides variations in how individuals experience and understand happiness [2].

2. Cultural considerations

Cultural norms shape human experiences, perceptions, expectations, and expressions of happiness [10–14]. Western cultures such as the USA, Canada, and

Australia are often known for their emphasis on individual freedom, achievements, and the pursuits of individual positive feelings whereas collectivistic cultures such as Japan, China, Korea, and Latin American countries put greater emphasis on the community, family, and human relationships [13]. The very construct of happiness varies across cultures. Uchida and Kitayama suggest that Americans often think of personal achievements and other positive experiences when asked about the definition of happiness, whereas in other cultures such as Japan give greater acceptance to the temporary nature of happiness and embedded in their definition is social stability [15]. How happiness is experienced and expressed varies across cultures. For example, in collectivistic cultures, happiness is displayed through low arousal positive emotions, such as calmness or contentment, while individualistic cultures tend to display high arousal positive emotions such as excitement, enthusiasm, and giddiness [16, 17]. It is therefore not surprising that European Americans typically desire experiencing peppy emotions like excitement and cheerfulness, while Hong Kong Chinese prefer calmer states like peace and serenity [18]. The relationship between some psychological variables and happiness varies by culture. For example, Diener et al. found that self-esteem was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction in individualistic communities only [18].

The notion that happiness is even universally desired is complex, and perhaps, mistaken. Consider research that found that Iranians and individuals from 13 other non-Western countries reported concerns that happiness has negative consequences [19, 20]. Their findings emphasized the strong relationship between fear of happiness and countries that tend to value conformity, formal rules, and interdependence. In many Asian cultures, fear of happiness is common due to the cultural belief that “extreme happiness begets tragedy” [21]. Happiness, therefore, needs to be balanced and moderated [21, 22]. In these countries, it is not uncommon for people to believe that one cannot always be lucky, especially after a long streak of happy events [19, 20].

In a survey conducted by the World Happiness Report in 2021, out of 149 countries, Finland ranked first in happiness, Iceland second, Denmark third, Switzerland fourth, and Netherlands fifth [23]. Happiness varies across and within different countries and regions. Consider the USA, for example, where researchers found that people living in more highly educated areas were happier than those living in less educated areas of the country [24–26]. However, highly educated people are not necessarily happier than less educated people within each city, county, or state. These findings highlight that the predictors of happiness vary at different levels even within the country or state an individual resides. Additionally, socio-political factors may also impact happiness. For example, good governance, political freedom, and low levels of corruption were found to be strong predictors of happiness [27].

3. Social factors

In this section, we consider three main social contexts or systems. The first is interpersonal relationships that include familial, platonic, and intimate. The second includes work environments where the bulk of people spend a significant proportion of their time, and the last is religious and spiritual contexts. We recognize that religion and spirituality have individual factors, but most religions have a social practice component.

3.1 Interpersonal relationships

One of the most essential social factors is the relationships we build with family and friends. Quality and quantity of social interactions are connected to increased levels of well-being when individuals experience more frequent and deeper social interactions [28]. Relationships with family and friends contribute to a range of psychological and physical health benefits. Holt-Lunstad and colleagues suggest that the quality of the close relationships we build are connected to healthier behavior, lower incidence of chronic illnesses, higher levels of happiness, and lower mortality [29]. The influence of friendship on happiness and life satisfaction has been well documented from a lifespan perspective. Friendships appear to be more important for older adults especially when their health begins to decline [30]. According to Smith and Christakis, happiness is nourished through social networks built by the individual with benefits ranging from sense of control, purpose in life, and are a source of self-esteem—all of which create resilience against the negative health effects that come from stress [31–33]. Several studies have also demonstrated that high subjective levels of happiness are connected to positive spousal and parent-child relationship which becomes even more important across the lifespan [34, 35]. Chopik states that friendships seem to be more important as they have a strong impact on health and happiness even after controlling for support and strain from other relationships [36].

Research suggests that the quality of the friendship may impact happiness. Erdley and colleagues [37] suggest that boys benefited more than girls from the quality of their best friend relationship. This is further supported by another study that showed that best friend relationships were more important in predicting happiness than close friendships [38]. The role of a best friend in the life of individuals and its relationship to happiness is connected. Best friends serve as a constant companion, a reliable confidant, and supportive person who often knows us better than ourselves and can become like family to most individuals, so it is no surprise that they are essential to our levels of happiness. This is even more crucial as we see that a low quality of a best friend relationship may have an overriding negative impact on happiness even to the point that having a high-quality relationship with close friends could not negate the effects of having a low-quality relationship with best friend [38].

Just as important is the relationship we have with our family and like any other relationship, if they are healthy, we tend to benefit greatly from it. Relationships with family members can create a sense of belonging and unconditional love that is unlike any other. Despite the large body of research on happiness, there are limited studies that focus on the effects of family familial relationships on happiness. Smetana and colleagues [39] suggest that our familial relationships often create the foundation for our support system especially during childhood and adolescence. Children with supportive and healthy family relationships during childhood and adolescence tend to have better health outcomes and greater overall happiness in adulthood [40]. It also appears that the more stable these positive family relationships are from childhood to adulthood, the more general happiness increases later in life which shows that early positive family relationships are directly linked to health and happiness in later life stages [40]. When children have positive family relationships it also helps to increase the child's emotional security, thereby decreasing the risk for emotional dysregulation, hostility, and aggression which are directly associated with poor physical health and psychological functioning [41]. There are very serious long-term connections between early family life and later health and happiness in life. Promoting healthier family dynamics could make or break how happy and fulfilled we feel later in life.

Intimate partner relationships also are significantly correlated with happiness. Research demonstrates that individuals who are married experience higher levels of happiness and are associated with less negative outcomes compared with individuals who are unmarried [42–45]. When compared with unmarried people, individuals in happy marriages experience higher levels of happiness than those who remain in unhappy marriages [42, 46]. There also exists a relationship between happy individuals and higher levels of happiness experienced in marriage [47] which can then contribute to the quality and happiness individuals experience in their marriage. This is an important distinction as it indicates the quality and perceived happiness of the marital relationship [34] contribute significantly to happiness compared with the notion that just being married equates to higher levels of happiness experienced [46]. While the bulk of the literature focuses on heterosexual couples, it is important to note that when examining LGBTQ+ couples and happiness, evidence has shown there are no significant differences between married heterosexual couples and same-sex couples in marital and civil unions in terms of happiness experienced [48, 49].

Cohabitation and long-term dating without marriage have increased in recent years. In 2012, approximately one in five Americans had never been married [50]. This trend has continued to increase as data now shows that between 1990 and 2019, the number of Americans that have never been married increased from 17 to 33% [51]. Chapman and Guven found that happiness does not predict someone's decision to get married. Individuals higher in happiness are less likely to stay in unhappy marriages and someone is less likely to stay single when they believe that a partnership can result in a happy marriage [46]. Findings regarding happiness and cohabitation without marriage and happiness and marriage have been mixed. Grover and Helliwell found that married individuals experience less of a deep U-shape in happiness levels across the lifespan compared with unmarried individuals [44], however, research from Blekesaune, examining marriage and cohabitation in British households, found that marriage only slightly increases happiness among individuals who have never been married and that cohabitation gives couples similar benefits as their married counterparts [52]. Additional research will be needed as the dynamics between marriage and cohabitation and happiness have ever shifted in recent years.

3.2 Employment

The role of work and income is also important when examining happiness given the amount of time the average individual spends at work. High-income earners demonstrate higher levels of life satisfaction while low-income earners experience lower levels of happiness [53]. Low-income earners experience higher levels of stress, negative emotions, and cognitions related to their ability to meet financial burdens. When individuals have a lower ability to meet and maintain financial needs because of lower incomes, they experience higher levels of stress which negatively impacts their emotions [54]. Life satisfaction and life evaluation are two components that can influence well-being, and both are influenced by personal and societal income. Personal income influences well-being through life evaluation because individuals use income as a measure of their current status in relation to what they would like to achieve. Additionally, living in a wealthier or poorer country can influence life evaluation and life satisfaction because higher levels of life satisfaction are correlated to living in a country with a larger economy [55].

The initial assumption in much of the literature hypothesized that an individual's happiness with their job was based upon their career and job satisfaction, however,

the inverse of this relationship has also been demonstrated. Boehm and Lyubomirsky found significant correlations between happy people having more engaging jobs, experiencing higher job satisfaction, earning higher levels of income later in life, and demonstrating superior work performance compared with individuals with lower levels of happiness [56]. Additional research has continued to support the correlation between happiness and positive affect influencing an individual's success in their career or work through better job performance, earning higher levels of income, positive relationships with coworkers, and receiving positive reviews from management [57–60].

Furthermore, Hofmann and colleagues found a correlation between higher life satisfaction for individuals in a professional or management position as well as with jobs that required higher skill sets [61]. Another unique relationship was found between utilizing personal income to purchase something for others and its positive influence on happiness. The concept of prosocial spending examines the relationship between using personal finances to donate to charity or purchase something for another person. Prosocial spending has demonstrated a positive influence on happiness when individuals purchase or give something to someone else instead of themselves [62–64].

3.3 Faith-based practices

Religiousness or spirituality has been shown to impact happiness and well-being both positively and negatively [65]. For example, Carlson et al. found that individuals who were religious experienced higher levels of happiness when facing adversity or negative outcomes, but this relationship was mediated due to their self-enhancement [66]. Thus, the reported positive life satisfaction was attributed to their expectations and ability to effectively cope with negative situations. Religion and happiness are also mediated by the aspect of social interaction that is part of many religious or spiritual practices. Many religious teachings espouse fellowship and community which can impact the level of happiness individuals feel because they can engage in social interactions with other supportive members of their religion or community [65, 67]. The relationship between religion and positive and negative coping has also demonstrated mixed results with different religions and different beliefs about the role of God impacting positive coping, negative coping, happiness, and well-being [65, 68, 69].

The relationship between being an atheist compared with a person of faith and the impacts of their belief or nonbelief was examined by Speed and Hwang [70]. Their findings demonstrated that being an atheist or theist did not impact an individual's level of happiness. It is worth noting in their study that individuals who perceived themselves to be religious reported higher levels of happiness, however, perception and happiness are not uniform [70].

4. Psychological factors

4.1 Happiness across the lifespan

Contrary to popular belief, aging does not have to result in an inevitable decline in happiness. Older individuals are not unhappier than middle-aged or younger persons, despite the declines in physical health, the deaths of peers and spouses, and other

difficulties that accompany aging [71–74]. There is research to suggest that happiness fluctuates across the lifespan. The relationship between age and happiness has for decades often been looked at as a U-shaped pattern which holds true across the USA, Germany, Britain, Australia, Europe, and South Africa [73]. The U-shaped pattern shows that happiness declines from a high point in young adulthood, to a low point in midlife, and then increases to another high point in old age [72, 75–77]. While this is true, Beja suggests that the high points of happiness for young adults are higher than the high points of happiness for older adults and happiness never returns to the highest point from when an individual was younger [75].

In contrast, some psychologists have proposed the possibility that happiness might be more of an upward trend that improves with time and age [78–80]. Carstensen suggested that as people age, they generally develop a better capacity to regulate their emotions so that as they move through adulthood, they can conceptualize their future better by investing in things that bring them more fulfillment and meaning [78, 79]. Carstensen proposed that younger people see the future as being largely open, whereas older people see the future as being more bounded therefore older individuals tend to reframe their life by increasing positives and minimizing negative effects. This view suggests that changes in our social perspective and emotional regulation play an important role in our levels of happiness across the lifespan which is vastly different from other theories that focus on the importance of demographic and social categories. We agree with Mroczek and Kolarz that personality, contextual, and sociodemographic variables, including interactions, are all needed to fully understand the relationship between age and happiness [81].

Despite evidence to support the U-shaped relationship between happiness and age, it is important to note that there are variables that will change and contribute to experiential differences of individuals as they age. Research on older populations has demonstrated that the decline in happiness across the lifespan is related to moderators [82]. Cooper and colleagues found that compared with their younger counterparts, living with a partner was more strongly correlated with happiness in older individuals in their 70s [82]. Attendance at religious services or places was also more important contributor of happiness in the elderly. Some studies have found that characteristics such as endorsing positive attitudes about aging [83] and describing oneself as happy [84] are associated with higher levels of happiness. Cooper and colleagues show that as people age, negative factors such as increasing medical problems, declining independence, and the inevitable loss of loved ones, can be mitigated by a number of positive factors including spirituality, emotional stability, more close-knit family and friends, etc.

4.2 Individual level psychological factors and happiness

In this section, we include the psychological factors such as personality traits, cognitive styles, and self-regulation capacities that influence or impact happiness. We also include psychological constructs such as purpose and finding meaning. A major psychological experiential factor is posttraumatic growth and how one's ability to overcome trauma and stress can influence their well-being and happiness.

Personality is a combination of biological and environmental factors that contribute to an individual's distinctive character [85]. According to trait theory, the five major personality traits are neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience [86] and these traits are relatively fixed and stable [87–89].

The relationship between personality traits and happiness has been well studied. A meta-analysis by DeNeve and Cooper found that personality is predictive of life satisfaction and happiness and that it can impact happiness because of how individuals perceive and experience life [90]. The personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness were strong predictors of life satisfaction and happiness compared with other personality traits. These findings have been supported throughout the literature. While happiness is not exclusively attributed to personality traits, the literature supports a strong correlation between specific personality traits and levels of happiness.

McCrae and Costa hypothesized that personality traits have an effect on one's well-being [91]. Research using the five-factor model found that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and low neuroticism are typically associated with positive well-being and happiness [92–96]. Some traits operate directly, as in the case of neuroticism as those that are higher on neuroticism are more likely to experience more dysphoric and anxious moods. Neuroticism has been shown to be more closely associated with negative factors such as negative affect or lower levels of happiness [90, 96–99]. Neuroticism also demonstrates large amounts of variance regarding subjective well-being [95] and is negatively correlated with self-efficacy [100]. Positive orientation toward one's future, self, and life can serve as a mediator for neuroticism and subjective happiness [99] which is consistent with other findings [100, 101]. Additionally, neuroticism and psychoticism have been shown to be negatively correlated with happiness [94, 97].

When examining personality traits that operate indirectly, individuals higher in extraversion are more likely to engage in social interactions that are likely to be rewarding and reinforce positive emotions. Researchers have explored the relationship between the trait of extraversion and happiness by examining if individuals high on extraversion are happier because of the extraversion trait or if positive outcomes experience through their behaviors, activities, and socialization reinforce are responsible for their levels of happiness [102–104]. Findings have demonstrated how activities and socialization contribute to happiness, which supports theories that happiness is not only driven by the personality trait of extraversion, but by engaging in extraverted behaviors which may impact the level of happiness or well-being a person experiences. Those who are higher on extraversion are more likely to engage in social interactions that are likely to be rewarding and reinforce positive emotions [105].

Research from Soto examined how neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience influence life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect from a large sample ($n = 16,367$) of Australian residents [98]. This study supported prior findings [90] regarding the correlation between extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and low neuroticism to higher levels of happiness. On the other hand, the data also demonstrated that subjective well-being (or happiness) could influence changes in personality due to individuals with higher levels of well-being becoming more agreeable and conscientious over time [90]. This bidirectional relationship exists because as individuals grow older, they assume more responsibilities and experience enduring life changes which contribute to personality maturation [87].

Happiness is influenced by an individual's cognitive process and ability to regulate emotions. Neuroscientists have sought to investigate the connection between brain states associated with happiness components in relation to well-being [106]. Cognitive processes play a role in life satisfaction and happiness because individuals utilize comparison to evaluate their ability to meet their needs, achieve goals, and

expectations for their life [107, 108]. Cognition is influenced by positive and negative emotions which can impact a person's cognitive process [109]. Quoidbach et al. suggest that the upregulation of positive emotion is important to the experience of happiness [108]. Emotional regulation is defined as the automatic or controlled process in which individuals influence the emotions they have, how they are experienced and when they express them [110]. Past research shows that positive upregulation strategies such as using humor and creativity to mitigate negative emotions can create positive ones [111, 112]. Jose et al. found that emotional regulation strategies can mediate and moderate the impact of positive experiences on happy mood [113]. The importance of the relationship between emotional regulation and cognitive processes demonstrates that positive affect can expand cognitions while negative emotions narrow a person's ability to see beyond negative moments [114].

4.3 Purpose and meaning

Oishi and Westgate propose that psychological richness (i.e., experiences that provide interest and influence perspective) is an additional mechanism through which individuals can achieve happiness [2]. Purpose contributes significantly to an individual's life due to the influence it has on goals (career or family), behaviors, positive affect, religiousness or spirituality, and happiness [115–117]. Purpose can be achieved through a variety of ways such as achievement, selecting a career path, pursuing parenthood, and spirituality and is distinctly different from goals. Many Western, industrialized countries have afforded young adults the opportunity to engage in further identity exploration and pursuit of purpose through the concept of emerging adulthood [118]. During this time, young adults postpone typical “adulthood” markers such as marriage, parenthood, and financial independence in pursuit of education, career development, and social exploration.

Although there is a wide held belief that parenthood adds purpose to an individual's life and those without children often experience lower levels of happiness, the research on this ideology is mixed [119–121]. Angeles found that married couples with children are “better off” and unmarried individuals without children are “worse off” [122]. Much of the research has supported the theory that individuals with children are happier than individuals without children [123–127]. Despite these findings, other research has supported that parenthood is associated with lower levels of happiness [128], being childless can be associated with higher levels of happiness for women at different points throughout the lifespan [129] and that there is no significant difference between having children or being childless and psychological well-being [130]. Research from Nelson et al. highlighted the importance of focusing on how or why parents may experience more or less happiness [124]. Their findings demonstrate that parenthood and happiness is a complex relationship influenced by negative emotions related to lack of sleep, marital issues, and financial problems as well as happy emotions such as greater meaning in life and enhanced social roles which contribute to higher levels of happiness when they are experienced. Research looking at factors impacting happiness and parenthood demonstrates that workplace policies regarding paid time off and childcare provide advantages for parents that can contribute to the level of happiness parents experience [131]. Perhaps the central focal point of happiness and parenthood should not be on whether having children or not having children is intrinsically linked to purpose and happiness, but rather on what factors enhance happiness for individuals with or without children.

4.4 Posttraumatic growth and happiness

Since writing *Twilight of the Idols* in 1888, Friedrich Nietzsche's "Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker" or "What does not kill me makes me stronger" has been immortalized as a proverb. Encountering challenges and facing adversity is something most individuals encounter, however, trauma is a significant event that is associated with negative emotions, risk or harm, or sometimes one's life. Traumatic events, therefore, have more potential impact than challenges or adversity. How individuals respond and recover from trauma can be connected to their overall happiness. When individuals experience a positive psychological change subsequent and as a result of a traumatic experience, it is called posttraumatic growth [132, 133]. It may appear counterintuitive that happiness can subsequently be related to experiencing negative emotions; however, some research has demonstrated there is significant importance in experiencing emotions as they are, even negative ones. While research demonstrates that individuals are happier the more they experience positive emotions, an effect has been demonstrated that people are happier when they experience their emotions, rather than avoid or suppress them, even if they are negative [134–135]. This is significant because sometimes negative emotions are associated with accomplishing a task or a goal. For example, while individuals prefer happier emotions, there are times that negative emotions may be useful, such as in asserting one's needs or boundaries. Research supports that utilizing negative emotions, when necessary, can actually have benefits for overall levels of happiness experienced [135]. The concept of how negative feelings can in fact enhance happiness, is applicable to the concept of posttraumatic growth. Individuals who have experienced trauma can reflect, process, and integrate the trauma experienced. The more an individual processes and integrates the trauma, the more likely posttraumatic growth can be achieved unless ruminations become intrusive, excessive, and continue for long periods of time [136]. Posttraumatic growth has been demonstrated to provide an individual with an enhanced appreciation for life, stronger and more meaningful personal relationships, and a richer life [133].

5. Conclusion

Happiness may ostensibly seem like a simple construct, but it is highly culturally dependent and influenced by several psychological and social variables. The common conceptualization of happiness consists of positive affect, contentment, well-being, joy, and life satisfaction, which is often associated with finding meaning and purpose. Happiness is associated with social and psychological variables, but research suggests that these variables do not necessarily operate universally, suggesting more complex relationships and interactions.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author details

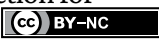
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Section 4

Anthropological Perspective

Socio-Cultural Basis of Happiness: African Existential Perspective

Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu

Abstract

It is at the root of every man's craving to be happy and all man's actions are implicitly or explicitly motivated by the desire to be happy. Happiness denotes a state of 'feeling good' about oneself and being 'satisfied' with one's affairs, which usually promotes well-being. Often, it is an individual's state of emotion in perceiving and judging the events around him and it is influenced by various factors ranging from genetic to environmental factors. Interestingly, the concept of happiness is increasingly gaining attention in various fields of studies. However, most literature focuses on economic and social status to explain the causes of happiness as the state of mind. To further the findings on the influential variables on happiness, this work conceptually and theoretically investigates into socio-cultural factors in relation to man's disposition to happiness. Being a cultural study, it therefore examines the socio-cultural basis of happiness from African existential perspective with spotlight on Nigerian experience. In doing so, it highlights African specific factors that interact to determine the happiness of the people and proffers suggestions for promotion of happiness for general well-being.

Keywords: happiness, pleasure, virtue, well-being, social values, culture, Africa, Nigerian experience, existential perspective

1. Introduction

Confronted with so many ugly events of life in the world of today across cultures, one may swiftly ask whether actually there is true feeling of happiness that endures. The outcome of this study responds to this question affirmatively. Emanating from socio-cultural dimension, it establishes that feeling of happiness is very essential for qualitative living. At the very heart of human existence lies the quest for happiness. In other words, every man directly or indirectly seeks to be happy. The study of happiness is in increasingly gaining enormous attention in the field of research from various disciplines across the globe. This is referred to as the science of happiness. Life itself is a complex phenomenon. Happiness that is a significant part of life is as well a multi-dimensional construct with philosophical, social, physical, emotional and behavioural components that is being championed by philosophers, theologians, psychologists and mental health practitioners. Most of the studies examine factors that promote subjective well-being and satisfaction of life based on accumulation of wealth and social recognitions.

This chapter adds up to establishing why people feel good despite all odds considering social contexts and cultural values from African lived experiences. It tries to present conceptual analyses and theoretical review of happiness as well as cultural values in relation to happiness with particular reference on African socio-cultural experiences. The findings will help to formulate policies and to create more effective interventions for promotion of human life and existence.

2. Conceptual analyses of happiness

With the understanding that philosophy is the Mother of all sciences, the study of happiness was mainly a philosophical theme, until recently. It is central to Greek ethics. Although perceived sometimes differently, almost all Greek ethical theorists emphasize that man desires happiness above all else. It was chiefly seen in the works of epicureans (hedonism) and Aristotle (*eudaimonia*). The hedonistic view identifies happiness as an outcome of pleasurable state (physical or mental as the case may be), which explains how well the individual lives in entertaining pleasure and avoiding evil as was majorly the position of the Epicureans. On the other hand, the eudaimonic perspective argues that individual's happiness is more than just the achievement of personal desires explaining that not all desires can cause fulfilment and joy [1]. Aristotle, who was credibly known for his concern for man's good life and what constitutes his ultimate happiness, established that happiness is the essence, that is, the ultimate end of all human activities. According to him, 'everything that we choose, we choose for the sake of something else- except happiness which is an end [2]'. He denotes happiness with the Greek term *eudaimonia* which he explains to mean a good life. Some writers refer to eudaimonia as science of happiness. Aristotle identifies happiness with virtuous acts for he conceives it as not just a state but a continuous activity of man towards attainment of his perfect nature, which involves his whole life. This was further analysed to mean that 'the pursuit of happiness presupposes an inner drive of continuous striving towards good moral character [3]'. So understood, Aristotle maintains that happiness is man's good life outside which nothing else is desired, the aim and ultimate goal in life of all human actions and endeavours. Along this line of thought and based on the long-term period that characterizes happiness, Kesebir and Diener conceive it as a subjective well-being and feeling of satisfaction with one's activities in life [4].

Down the ages, the concept of happiness has been advanced and further conceived variously based on different contexts and foci of studies. Despite all definitions, it is generally perceived as a subjective experience characterized with feelings of well-being. It is usually understood as a positive feeling of the individual based on his appraisal of his environment and the events of life around him. This positive feeling of oneself and of one's environment is often referred to as subjective well-being. The concept of well-being has been an interesting research theme for philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and social and health workers. In psychology, happiness belongs to the umbrella concept of Psychological Well-Being (PWB), which is chiefly conceived as positive functioning of the individual [5, 6]. It was rationalized that happiness presupposes a certain psychological state. Against this background, the Aristotelian eudaimonic concept of happiness gained more popularity over that of epicurean (hedonic view) especially within psychological domain because it was widely accepted to have more enduring effects on psychological health. World Health Organization defines psychological health, which encapsulates happiness as 'a state

of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community [7]. Ryan and Deci who also understood happiness as an aspect of well-being defined it as 'experiencing high levels of affect and a high degree of satisfaction with life [8]'. Like Aristotle, they consider psychological well-being not as a final state of man but as a continuous journey of realizing individual's potentials and a balance between positive and negative effects in the search for meaning in life. Their understanding of it as a positive functioning and effective development of individual's abilities can well be equated with Aristotelian happiness as perfection of man's life through virtuous acts. Eventually, the emergency of positive psychology led to increased research on happiness for positive living.

3. Theoretical review of happiness

3.1 Happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the basis of Greek ethics

Happiness is a fundamental concept in Greek philosophy especially within the context of ethics where enquiries into man's good life are mainly carried out. With the investigations and analyses on man's constant quest for good life, most Greek philosophers endorse that happiness is the ultimate goal of human existence. On this, Pohlenz observes that 'Greek ethics is eudaimonic...and it is certainly true...eudaimonic is regularly regarded by the Greek as moral good [9]'. However, informed by different schools of thought, the understanding of the source and sustenance of the ultimate good (happiness) varies as can be seen subsequently. Based on the nature of this work which demands that many details be set aside, the review of happiness on Greek ethics will assume two major perspectives of eudaimonism and hedonism.

Eudaimonism is a Greek word that generally refers to well-being (happiness). However, Greek philosophers argue that achievement of well-being occurs in different ways. Hence, the eudaimonic and hedonistic concepts. Within this context, eudaimonic well-being relates happiness to striving towards meaning and sense of purpose in life. The eudaimonists hold that happiness is attained through human efforts by practice of virtues. Understandably, it is virtue-based (*arête*) happiness. On the other hand, hedonism associates happiness often with experiences of pleasure, comfort and self-gratification, which minimizes or even avoids pains. Hence, it is pleasure-based happiness.

3.2 Socrates, Plato and Aristotle on happiness (*eudaimonia*)

The triad—Socrates, Plato and Aristotle may be collectively classified as eudaimonic philosophers based on the virtue-related happiness which they generally champion. That is, man's happiness is dependent on virtuous life motivated by sense of purpose and striving towards meaningful existence. This position is also shared by the stoics whose eudaimonic doctrine is traceable to Socrates. The stoics claim that man's major aim in life is to live a rational life according to human nature in conformity with his unique nature. Pohlenz noted that reason (*logos*) is a cardinal concept in the philosophy of happiness of the stoics [10]. Like Aristotle and Socrates, man's happiness is guided by reasonable actions.

They all submit that everyone desires happiness as the highest goal of all human activities. Therefore, happiness is central to human life. They consider the human soul

as responsible for all the vital human activities and as such the bearer of virtues that lead to happiness. This position was further expanded and systematized in Aristotle's theory of soul-*De Anima* [11].

However, both Socrates and Plato underscore internal goods such as justice, wisdom, courage and self-control as qualities of the soul and sources of cognition and practical thoughts that avail moral goodness and happy life. They argue that happiness does not depend on external goods but on the right practice of virtues. Socrates in particular contends that happy life is not simply pleasure that flows from external good such as honour, fame, power, for they do not bring about excellence but virtue does and makes wealth and everything else good for man [12]. He then counsels that the soul should be cared for as the hub for moral goods. Aristotle acknowledges that happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue as maintained by the duo but he contends that external goods too such as wealth, fame, honour, friendship, power, are necessary for attainment of happiness. Explaining how external goods have valuable contribution to happiness, he states:

*Nevertheless it seems clear that happiness needs the addition of external goods..for it is difficult if not impossible to do fine deeds without any resources. Many can only be done *by the help of friends, or wealth, or political influence. There are also certain advantages such as good ancestry or good children, or personal beauty, the lack of which mars our felicity; for a man is scarcely happy if he is very ugly to look at, or of low birth, or solitary and childless; and presumably even less so if he had children or friends who are quite worthless, or if he had good ones who are now dead. So, as we said, happiness seems to require this sort of prosperity too; which is why some identify it with good fortune, although others identify it with virtue [13].*

Concerning the care of the soul for optimal functioning and happiness of the individual, Socrates counsels, 'You my friend- a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens- are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul which you never regard or heed at all [14]'. With the above, Plato insists that virtues which guarantee happiness are automatically acquired through the care of the soul. Against this background, he places the care of the soul above external goods. Inversely, Aristotle teaches that human soul is the form and actuality of the body of any living being in which case it gives it the capacity to function and sustain itself. Based on this vital principle, the soul does not have an independent existent so does the body. According to him, 'the soul neither exists without a body nor is a body of some sort. For it is not a body, but it belongs to a body and for this reason, is present in a body, and in a body of such-and-such a sort [15]'. In this sense, the soul needs some external goods for its care and sustenance. Actually, the care of the soul has to do with the ethical dimension of man which involves practical reasoning. Both Socrates and Aristotle give the understanding that man is a rational being whose happiness lies in actions ruled by reason with clear understanding of his nature and place in the universe. Hence, Socrates claims that knowledge is virtue and practice of virtue brings about happiness. So also, Aristotle illustrates that right reason and right desire lead to virtuous acts and consequently to happiness. No wonder, the soul is closely linked to moral life of man. Human reason, which is part of the soul brings knowledge and rational wisdom that guide and regulate human life. Among all, Aristotle is credibly known to have propounded a more systematic theory of happiness as can be seen below.

3.3 Aristotle's theory of happiness

Aristotle explicates his treatise on happiness in his monumental *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE) as he responds to the question regarding the ultimate purpose of human existence towards which all human activities are directed. For him, it is 'a virtuous activity of the soul [16]', the kind of virtue that depicts the best and most perfect life of man. In fact, it is the purpose and ultimate goal of human life and existence, 'that at which all things aim [17]'. In other words, 'something that is in itself completely satisfying [18]'. Thus, Aristotle characterizes happiness as 'the supreme good [18]' and the best of all human possessions which is self-sufficient, emanating from the best activities of 'the practical life of the rational part [19]' (activity of the soul) of man acquired through virtuous acts 'in a complete life time [19]'. For he argues that 'one swallow does not make a summer; neither does one day. Similarly, neither can one day or a brief space of time make a blessed man truly happy [20]'. Following the above, he defines a happy man as,

One who is active in accordance with complete virtue, and who is adequately furnished with external goods, and that not for some unspecified but throughout a complete life...destined both to live in this way and to die accordingly; because the future is obscure to us, and happiness we maintain to be an end in every way utterly final and complete...those who possess and continue to possess the stated qualifications are supremely happy- but with a human happiness [21].

He then concludes that,

The happy man will have the required quality, and in fact will be happy throughout his life; because he will spend all his time, or the most time of any man, in virtuous conduct and contemplation. And he will bear his fortunes in the finest spirit and with perfect sureness of touch, as being 'good in every truth' and 'foursquare without reproach' [22].

In this sense, Waterman hinted that Aristotelian happiness is clearly distinguished from hedonic form of happiness understood as pleasure [23]. He further explains *daimon*—'true self' as the 'realization of personal potentials which gives greatest fulfillment [20]'. In this context, *eudaimon* is understood as man's activity in accordance with his *daimon* (true self). While hedonic form of pleasure may be lost in a few hours because it is instant gratification, that is, pleasure of the moment, so it is not with *eudaimonia* for it is strictly linked to virtuous life (*arête*—good moral character) of man built towards perfection over a long period of time. On this note, 'he is happy who lives in accordance with complete virtue, and who is adequately furnished with external goods, and that not for some chance of period but throughout a complete life [19]'. In this sense, Aristotelian happiness which is not gotten immediately usually requires a kind of sacrifice owing to the obvious fact that development of character that leads to virtuous act which helps to attain perfect good, needs constant efforts of the will (*conatus*) towards the ultimate result which again negates *akrasia* (weakness of the will). So, Aristotle maintains,

The function of man is to live a certain kind of life, and this activity implies a rational principle, and the function of a good man is the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed, it is performed in accord with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, then happiness turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue [24].

Following these, Aristotle's happiness is always differentiated from hedonistic pleasures.

3.4 Hedonistic theory of happiness

Hedonism is a Greek word for pleasure and it is the second major category of happiness in Greek philosophy as specified earlier in this work. Hedonism is one of the major forms of happiness in philosophical discourse. It identifies happiness with pleasant experiences of life. In other words, hedonistic happiness tends towards pleasures than pains. Hence, hedonistic principle is 'maximization of pleasure and minimization of pain'. Therefore, it denotes happiness based on pleasure [25]. This theory is significantly rooted in utilitarianism which in all its variants purports that pleasure should be ultimately desired, while pains should be avoided. Hence, it advances pleasure for the maximum number of people.

Hedonism teaches that pleasure as satisfaction of desires is the motivation of all human actions and it is the ultimate goal of human existence. Like Aristotle, happiness is conceived by hedonists as the ultimate good but which is characterized with pleasure and absence of pain. This form of happiness is often referred to as inauthentic when especially compared with Aristotelian eudaimonia. It naturally lacks the character of life satisfaction (enduring trait) which has to do with the quality of the individual's life built over the years, that is, a long-term period of positive emotions that depict to some extent authentic happiness. Despite the distinction made between cyrenaic and epicurean hedonism regarding the momentary pleasure, both hedonistic perspectives are considered as imbued with temporary happiness, which can equally disappear as it comes even with the lightning speed. For this obvious reason, hedonism is usually differentiated from life satisfaction perspective of happiness.

Hedonistic concept of happiness is chiefly identified with Greek philosophical schools of thought of cyrenaicism and epicureanism who upholding that pleasure generally understood as delightful experiences is the ultimate goal in life towards which all human actions tend. They distinguish themselves from those of eudaimonic theorists whose conception of happiness is more closely connected to virtue. Although the hedonists commonly submit that pleasure is the highest good, they somewhat differ in their perceptions of it and in its relationship with happiness.

The cyrenaics' hedonistic doctrine of happiness maintains that pleasure is the supreme good in life and pain is evil. The cyrenaics claim that physical (bodily) pleasure characterized by 'the moment' is more intense and therefore, it is cherished more than mental pleasure. Hence, they are referred to as sensual hedonists [26]. This very position is the major feature that distinguishes them from the epicureans who tenaciously hold that mental pleasures are preferred over that of the physical.

The epicureans on the other hand relate that man should attain the greatest necessary and possible degree of pleasures, while avoiding pains. But unlike the Cyrenaics, they buttress mental pleasure which is experienced in the past, present and future against physical pleasure experienced mainly momentarily [27]. As such, they counselled that enjoyment of pleasure should be done with caution so as to circumvent over-indulgence that may be inherent in it. So, they state, 'wise person should be in control of pleasures and not be enslaved to them, otherwise, pain will result [28]'. Based on this proposition, avoidance of pain and sorrow which also involves evading unnecessary pleasure becomes the major goal in life and central concern of the epicureans as not every pleasure is worth pursuing. According to them, 'man should avoid pain as much as possible as commanded by nature and try to heed to only natural and

necessary pleasures [29]'. In their understanding, the greatest pleasure to be attained is total elimination of physical pain (a state of *aponia*) and mental fear (a state of *ataraxia*) through control of desires which they perceive to produce pains due to not always being satisfied. To this end, external goods such as wealth, fame are unnatural, vain and empty desires that could lead to discomfort *vis-à-vis* pain and mar happiness [30]. Both epicureans and cyrenaics underplay virtuous acts as necessary means towards a happy life as compared to the eudaimonists.

The study of happiness which was originally championed by philosophers from two major general theoretical perspectives, namely; hedonistic and eudaimonic approaches eventually developed into various theories.

3.5 Theory of Model of Psychological Well-Being

The theory of Model of Psychological Well-Being that was developed by Bradburn in 1969 concerns itself with man's happiness which brought a paradigm shift from studies on symptoms of mental illness to a focus on positive functioning and interplay of daily experiences of the individual. Interestingly, this theory bears heavily on Aristotelian eudaimonia. Bradburn established that social and economic changes affect individual's happiness and that positive and negative emotions influence psychological health [5].

3.6 Theory of Tripartite Model of Subjective Well-being

In 1994, Diener who was Bradburn's colleague also propounded a theory of happiness known as Tripartite Model of Subjective well-being. His theory focuses mainly on individual's well-being. He postulates that how an individual perceives himself in relation to his environment affects his happiness. Therefore, the theory was employed to explain how an individual appraises his feelings within the environment in given situations as positive and desirable or as negative and undesirable. Hence, Diener argues that the degree of individual's happiness depends on his emotions (affect) and judgement of satisfaction (cognitive factor) in particular and general situations of his life (environment). As such, he accentuates that those affective, cognitive and contextual factors are intertwined in determining the individual's experiences of the quality of his life *vis-à-vis* his happiness. He also hints that personality traits, though not well emphasized, also add to the dispositions of the individual triune factor as mentioned above in judgement of his environment and consequently in regulating his happiness. Diener also demonstrates that pursuit of goals and commitment to them lead to life satisfaction and happiness [31]. Recognizing the possibility of complex interplay between culture, environment and emotions in an individual's life and happiness, he notes that positive emotional responses to the environment improve individual's happiness.

3.7 Five-Factor Theory of Well-Being

Based principally on Aristotelian eudaimonia and on positive perspectives of humanistic philosophy, Seligman developed a Five-Factor Theory of Well-Being in 1998 to investigate the conditions that foster psychological health and optimal functioning of the individual through effective exercise of skills and abilities. It integrated five dimensions of **P**ositive emotion, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning in life and **A**ccomplishment (PERMA) that enhance individual's happiness [32].

Hence, a five-factor theory can also be referred to as PERMA theory. With this theory, Seligman was accredited as the founder of positive psychology. This new domain of psychological well-being now enables robust studies on good human life including individuals' happiness other than just examinations of symptoms of mental illness. In other words, there was a paradigm shift from the emphasis on mental health and maladaptive behaviours to a more positive functioning of the individual that also helps to avert the mental symptoms. Hence, positive psychology emphasizes the beneficial effects of positive experiences on human health. Therefore, with PERMA model, Seligman accentuates aspects of human experiences, individual and social dimensions that promote happiness and well-being.

3.8 Six-Factor Theory of Psychological Health

The Six-Factor Theory of Psychological Health which assumed that well-being of individuals depends mainly on both the individual and the environment was developed by Ryff in 1989. It considered social milieu as one of the most significant contexts for individual's happiness. Re-conceptualizing the notion of eudaimonia through re-visitation of its philosophical root was Ryff's fundamental aim, in order to demonstrate its central idea that happiness is the goal of human life that has gross health benefits [33]. With the postulation that the individual's psychological health depends on his positive functional abilities in key areas of life, he integrated various perspectives that create a multi-dimensional model of psychological well-being that challenges hedonic pleasure which lacks the essence of eudaimonia (the strive towards excellence). As such, he identified purpose in life, personal growth, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, interpersonal relationship and autonomy as key basic dimensions to well and fully functioning individuals for their promotion of health and happiness. This portrays his view that there is a close relationship between the environment (social context) and individual's well-being [34]. He acknowledges that the environment poses certain stress on the individual, which necessitates effective coping. Therefore, his ability to manage his context and daily activities effectively (environmental mastery), establish and maintain trustworthy and meaningful bonds with others (positive interpersonal relationship) and yet be independent enhances good psychological health. Ryff's notion of environmental mastery is a core feature of psychological health, which leans heavily on Frankl's logotherapeutic view of 'will to meaning'—the individual's quest to choose and create suitable and meaningful environment for purposeful existence. It also involves the manipulation and control of complex environmental issues through mental and physical activities such that active participation becomes a positive psychological functioning that enhances psychological health of the individual. Psychologically healthy individual also possesses the ability to regulate his feelings, thoughts and actions, while he sticks to his own convictions (autonomy) despite the social pressures as he continuously grows through trajectory processes of development, actualize his potentials and improve on them through openness to new experiences (personal development).

Ryff's concept of personal growth closely relates to Aristotle's view of eudaimonia and reflects also Frankl's existential 'will to meaning' and even Maslow's dynamic growth and actualization of potentials. His re-conceptualization of eudaimonian concept highlights that happiness is the activity of the highest virtue to be realized through the development of self and actualization of personal potentials. Hence, the ultimate goal in life is to strive for realization of one's full potential.

From the reviews above, it becomes obvious that most theories of psychological well-being lean so much on Aristotle's theory of happiness. Again, it can as well be delineated that social context and cultural values are very significant variables in determining man's happiness. It becomes necessary then to investigate into socio-cultural factors in relation to happiness.

4. Happiness and socio-cultural values

Happiness seems to be positively associated with social and cultural values. Studies on happiness especially in the areas of socio-cultural anthropology demonstrate that culture matters significantly in influencing people's happiness. Studies by Triandis [35] show that there is a significant correlation between culture and happiness and that life satisfaction highly relates to communal activities especially with close relationships among families. Biswas-Diener and Diener [36] reveal that culture can positively or negatively impact on individuals' happiness.

Culture is defined as 'a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society [37]'. It has to do with shared lives, norms and activities that guide the thoughts, feelings and actions of a given people which develop through social interactions. Simply put, culture is people's way of life which gives them identity and values. It helps to form their attitudes (belief, thought and actions). In fact, it is the total sum people's life; belief, art, norm, clothing, food, religion, educational and health systems, language of communication, sense of hospitality, family relationships, etc. As a matter of fact, culture is a philosophy of first order. It shapes the life of the people especially how they perceive reality (world-view) and suggests 'how people develop a sense that their lives are good [38]'.

Every culture is unique and has specific manner of operation and values attached to it, shared by a given people including what accounts for their well-being *vis-à-vis* their happiness. Some of these cultural values are embedded in symbols pregnant with meanings and interpretations. Such values in African culture include close family ties and communal living, sense of hospitality, respect for elders, religiousness, being humorous, use of proverbs, social activities, oral tradition of events from one generation down to the next which involve speaking and listening skills. They offer the people necessary conditions for authentic existence and realization of their goals in life. They are raw materials that shape the personality and character of given people at given periods and determine how they perceive the world in general and their immediate environment in particular as well as how they express their feelings in reactions to them.

5. Socio-cultural basis of happiness: african existential perspective

Africa is one of the largest continents of the world. She is well known for her rich and dynamic cultures that promote the life of the people. Though faced with enormous life challenges that threaten human life and existence ranging from heightened corruption to political instability, religious unrest, mismanaged economy, poverty, violent of all sorts and at varied degrees, etc., that are responsible for the continental underdevelopment, yet Africans generally have positive dispositions towards life. They still appear happy and most African nations rank top among the

happiest countries in the world. No wonder, they are tagged with the famous aphorism 'suffering and smiling' that characterize the life of the common masses, which clearly explains that though they are besieged with sufferings and sometimes with unimaginable adversities, yet they find authentic reasons to be happy and are globally acknowledged as happy people. The most recent world happiness report of 2022 from Gallup World poll which considered three main indicators of happiness as life evaluations, positive and negative effects ranked 21 African countries among the first 119 happy nations of the World out of 146 participating countries [39].

Nigeria, which is considered the giant and queen of Africa, is a typical example of an African nation whose citizens remain so happy despite the harsh situations of life that challenge their existence. One then wonders—what gives them happiness? It seems illogical, for example that a hungry man even without being sure of the next meal or a homeless man whose house was destroyed by the fierce wind and rain, etc., still feels happy. This goes a long way to explain that the feeling of happiness is more than just mere acquisition of material goods. A good number of other variables are responsible for people's happiness.

This chapter educates that such factors that relate to feeling of happiness include cultural and social features. It establishes that cultural differences account for life evaluations with regard to subjective well-being and people's happiness. Social relations are cultural ties that keep the people together in mind and body. Socio-cultural factors are strong indicators of happiness in Nigeria and Africa in general.

We have earlier discussed culture as shared lives, norms, practices, social, moral, religious, aesthetic, economic values, etc., that guide the thoughts, feelings and actions of a given people. African culture in particular can further be understood as 'the sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, arts, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterize Africans [40]'. Myths, folklores, proverbs, language, social and religious activities, common life, marital rites, funeral rites, legal practices, inheritance rights and rites, initiation rites of developmental stages of life and into various age grades, groups, etc., traditions, political activities, historical contexts, educational and health systems, cultural dynamism, festive events, food, drink, eating habits, symbols, countenances, expressions, sage, popular wisdom, sense of hospitality, family ties, daily lived experiences, all give Africans their cultural identity and values that single them out as unique people comparable to others. These cultural features provide the framework for interpretations, feelings and actions collectively referred to as attitude of the people. It is an existential issue.

No doubt, Africans are confronted with myriad of existential challenges that are expected to mar their happiness significantly. But research constantly report high level of happiness among Africans even more than many well-developed countries with well-established economic conditions that promote health and longevity. This situation elicits obvious existential questions such as whether happiness can be experienced in the absence of expected factors that cause happiness, for example high and stable economic status, good development. A case at hand is that of Africa and Nigeria in particular. Responding to this question, Agbo, Nzeadibe and Ajaero hinted that, 'happiness as reported by Nigerians pose a paradox when examined in the light of many factors shown in the literature to enhance happiness, especially concerning the economy [41]'.

Arguing further, they asserted that 'because of harsh socio-economic conditions in which many Nigerians live, they may compensate with consolatory feelings of happiness in order to counteract the lingering negative effect of those conditions'. According to them, 'happiness as reported by Nigerians does not connote actual

satisfaction with life but a psychological therapeutic intervention against negative feelings which they encounter every day. This view is supported by the fact that health outcomes in Nigeria do not reflect such high reports of happiness [41]. They suggest then that religion may have aided this adaptive phenomenon.

With this position, Agbo et al. consider happiness expressed by many Nigerians as an adaptive mechanism that helps them to pull through their existential challenges and conditions of life. So they endorsed, 'the feeling of happiness they report does not mean that they are truly happy with the situation but that reporting otherwise could only aggravate the matter. Thus, reporting of happiness is not only therapeutic, but also serves as a strategy developed to the situation [42]'. This again justifies the position of evolutionary psychologists who conceive emotions as adaptive mechanism that evolve as individuals experience their environments [43, 44].

This chapter contends the view of Agbo et al. Although, it partly agrees that Africans *vis-à-vis* Nigerians express happiness in order not to feel the weight of their sufferings, it disputes that their happiness is not totally a defence mechanism as they stated. Otherwise, that would make it seem as if the nature of their happiness is somewhat mechanical. Far from that! This chapter observed that Nigerians are mostly happy because they really feel so. Their state of joys expressed in 'belly laughter' is a typical example of a true state of happiness. The argument that health outcomes in Nigeria do not demonstrate, so to say, real happiness does not simply explain it because health care programme in Nigeria is not well advanced to take care of all health problems. Besides, the issue of health is a complex one that does not depend on one's degree of happiness alone. In fact, there are other major factors in relation to that. From personal experiences and from very short oral random interviews that I conducted with my colleagues from South-East (Igbo part) of Anambra state in Nigeria during the course of writing this chapter, I realized that Nigerians and by extension Africans are really happy people predisposed already from their cultural and existential experiences of their social relationships which they cherish a lot. To the question posed to them, the responses gathered are almost similar. Thus:

Why do you feel happy despite the ugly situation of the nation especially in this recent time?

'I feel happy whenever I remember my loved ones; family, relatives, friends, etc. especially when things are going well for them. I feel happy being with my loved ones and sharing experiences including childhood memories. I feel happy whenever I receive my salary despite the amount. I feel happy each time I think of my children and other family members. I feel happy whenever I go out with friends to eat and drink and tell stories. I feel happy because I know that future is brighter and there is much hope that things will turn out better. I try to be happy because it is better to accept whatever I cannot change in order to have peace. I am happy because life goes on despite all. I feel happy because every struggle ends in this world. I try to be happy so to avoid health problems. I am happy because we cannot question God. I am happy because being sad will worsen the situation. I feel happy because we always console one another and show solidarity' and likely responses.

I was particularly moved by the response of a student whom I know too well that she is facing a lot of family challenges that affected her academically and deprived her from writing her semester examinations. She always put smiling face even in the midst of such troubles. On a certain day, when she ran close to greet me, I curiously asked her: tell me, why are you always happy even now that you are not able to join your mates for the examinations? She swiftly replied, 'I have no choice than to accept my fate. I don't want to brood over my life. Future is brighter'. When I insisted to

know more about the source of her happiness at least at that material time because her face was radiating with smiles. She quickly uttered that the final year students (her senior colleagues) just finished their final examinations and they are rejoicing. So, she is happy for them. This is a very clear indication that Africans rejoice and mourn with one another when need be. It is a spirit of solidarity and communitarianism. 'African communitarianism is such that was founded on extended family-hood and brotherhood with the guiding principle of solidarity. Based on this cultural background, many African philosophers argue that man is a communitarian being. The Igbo-African man for example, maintains a triangular relationship of we-existence (the individual, the community and the creator [45]'. African spirit of solidarity creates an avenue for rallying to celebrate and to mourn together, even to support one another in various ways. Mbiti's assertion on African spirit of brotherhood can quickly be represented here—'I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am [46]'

However, the above responses suggest strongly that the social life of Igbo-Nigerians is well embedded in their culture and it is a very significant variable in promoting their happiness more than even economic status. The Igbo-African proverbs which say that *mmekita aru bu uto nwanne* (human warmth is the joy of brotherhood) and *uwa achoghi ntukwuba onu* (there is no need looking gloomy) explain it all; why Africans try to transcend their difficulties and be happy in all conditions. In all these responses too, one could hear the words of Balogun echoing, 'Africans have such systems, embedded in their culture with which they have been able to strike a balance between the chaotic and unfriendly world and their own need for survival and continued existence [47]'. They alleviate worry, filter in positive feelings that boost happiness individually and collectively. Nigerians in particular are creative and humorous people who also engage themselves a lot in jokes with almost every facet of their lives. These socio-cultural features aid them to overcome the day's difficulties and lessen the weight of negative feelings, while being enriched with pleasant emotions.

At this juncture, one must admit that infiltration of other cultures gradually affects African culture. But naturally, they have and to a great extent maintain their positive perception about life with such an indomitable spirit to continue to strive despite the obstacles on life's way. That is why, any typical Nigerian especially from the Igbo tribe can survive in any given place, in any given condition and at any given time. Through their attitude of 'suffering and smiling', they generally exhibit optimistic tendencies even when the situation is at its worst, including dying and death. Consequently, pessimism has a very minor position in their lives.

Frankl's submission on meaning in life also appears to align with this African existential perspective which seems to refute the suggestion of Agbo et al. on paradox of happiness among Nigerians. In Franklian understanding, 'man is a being who can get used to anything [48]' including any condition in life and the *how* depends on the individual. 'It is the peculiarity of man to live by looking to the future [49]'

Based on his experience in Nazi concentration camp, where he eventually found himself in prison life, he revealed that 'a man who could not see the end of his "provisional existence" was not able to aim at an ultimate goal in life. He ceased living for the future [50]'. With Sartre, he declared that in freedom, 'man invents himself, he designs his own "essence"; what he essentially is, including what he should be, or ought to become [51]'. As a medical doctor and as a psychotherapist and through his own existential experience in the camp, he illustrates that despite all extreme conditions of life, it is still worth living. He was stripped to naked existence and exposed to unimaginable harsh conditions of life; he lost every possession including all members of his family except her sister, hunger, chronic lack of food, humiliation, forms of

extreme brutality, physical and emotional abuses, mental agony, constant anxiety of waiting for extermination, etc. In all these, he concluded, that 'human being is not one thing among others; things determine each other, but *man* is ultimately self-determining. What he becomes – within the limits of endowment and environment- he has made out of himself [52]'.

On this note, the African existential perspective of socio-cultural basis of happiness brings to limelight the principle of existentialism that existence precedes essence. In other words, man first came into existence through no choice of his but then shapes his life through the daily dainty free choices he makes including transcending his predicaments and limiting existential conditions of human life. For this reason, 'man is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values... Values do not drive a man; they do not push him, but rather to find the right answers pull him [53]'. Frankl's philosophy of logotherapy reveals that 'if there is purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and in dying. But no man can tell another what this purpose is. Each must find out for himself and must accept the responsibility that his answer prescribes [54]'. It further enlightens that 'suffering ceases to be suffering as soon as we form a clear and precise picture of it [55]'. For 'life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual... Sometimes, man may be required simply to accept fate, to bear his cross... When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer, he will have to accept his sufferings as his task... his unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden [56]'.

The Frankl's logotherapeutic motto which is built on Nietzschean dictum that, 'he who has a *why* to live, can bear with almost any *how* [57]' permeates African lifestyle. That is to say, whoever is alive should live hopefully and happily for 'that which does not kill, make us stronger [58]'. This explains the fact that living is an art embedded in people's culture. African existence connects both culture and belief where concepts of God, man and the world intermingle. Perhaps their belief in and continuous feel of the presence of God too make them transcend their existential limitations. African writers generally conceive that Africans show profound faith in God which pervade all they do. In dealing with African beliefs, cultures and traditions, the African philosophical doyen Mbiti declares that naturally 'Africans are notoriously religious [59]'.

Corroborating Mbiti's position, Mbaya and Cezula write 'Mbiti demonstrated that indeed Africans had not only possessed an organized religion but also had a notion of the Supreme Being [60]'. Illustrating Mbiti's stance further, Nieder-Heitmann pointed out that 'Religion is to the Africans an ontological phenomenon which pertains to the question of existence or being... Africans have a religious ontology [61]'. Agbo et al. acknowledge that 'Although the influence of religion on happiness has been demonstrated across several nations, we suggest that the degree to which it influences reporting of happiness varies across nations and we argue that the degree to which it influences happiness among Nigerians may be greater than other indices, such as economy, freedom and development [41]'. The influence of religion on happiness among Nigerians proves so clear in their daily life. This is evidenced in the high increase of religious activities which permeates all aspects of the life of Nigerians from sunrise till sunset; as they wake up till they go to bed. Many African authors acknowledge the central role that religion plays in the life of Nigerians and its inseparability from their daily events [62, 63]. Religion is not simply one's concern with one's belief in God, it is a strong cultural and even a social phenomenon in Africa that contributes significantly to African life and existence. In fact, it is a major existential factor to peaceful and happy dispositions of Africans.

6. Nigerian communitarian experience as a socio-cultural factor in relation to happiness

It is an existential fact that Nigerians are communitarian beings who cherish and committedly engage themselves in socio-cultural activities that shape and give meaning to their lives. Marriage, that is, the union of two or more mature adults (in case of polygamy) is the very cradle of the communitarian life of the people. It is a sacred union that brings families, kindreds, villages and towns together in happy and lasting relationships. As such, family is a very vital aspect of Nigerian culture and social life. As a matter of fact, every reasonable Nigerian longs to get married and to give his own children into marriage and even wishes to see his own grand and great grandchildren before his death. Such a person perceived himself and he is considered in Nigerian context as having lived a fulfilled and happy life. In contrast, it is believed to be a pronounced misfortune not to marry (except for wilful celibates) and worse still a curse almost, if the marital union is not blessed with a child(ren). Children are so much cherished as they are major sources of joy and they guarantee the future of the families. To this end, celibate life is perceived as alien to Nigerian culture.

In typical Nigerian setting, getting married occurs in various stages with rich cultural practices from both families which eventually extends to the nuclear families and further to the larger community and possibly to the entire town and even beyond. Marriage is regarded as the seed of culture for it has a serious cultural significance. Fundamentally, it indicates life and love which are best realized in Marriage. It is an indispensable factor for the continuation of family lineage. Therefore, procreation is central to Nigerian marriage and male child is more desirable to ensure this continuity. Each culture has its own way of celebrating the marital union according to its norms and customs.

At marriage, every Nigerian couple is confronted with 'three worlds'; namely, the traditional world, the civil/legal world and the religious world and all three must be satisfied before the duo are considered to be legitimately married. In traditional marriage, both families come together as the bride's family traditionally hands over their daughter to the intending groom. The traditional rites vary according to culture and custom of the people. The civil marriage is done according to the civil laws of the nation. For the Church marriage, every Church conducts marriage of her members according to her specific rites. In all, marriage is accompanied with boundless happiness for everyone. In fact, it is seen as an immense blessing.

Communal life binds Nigerians together in the spirit of brotherhood. In socializing and sharing their cultural heritage, they often gather to work, discuss issues that concern them and celebrate together. They have colourful festivals with rich cultural displays including masquerades of different types, sizes, colours and species, dancing groups of both young and old people, local music, sports, dressing, food delicacies, even religious activities, etc., that promote life and people's well-being. Social life helps to ease work pressures, unfavourable existential burdens, deepen love, reconcile enemies and maintain stronger family bonds. Festive periods such as Christmas, New Year, Easter and new yam festivals are usually hoped for because they are uniquely celebrated. Besides, most major socio-cultural events take place during those occasions. Many relatives come together to share their lives and experiences and inter-change memorable visits and connect with their new and/or lost relations. Many Nigerians in diaspora seize the golden happy festive opportunities to come home and meet their relatives and friends.

Nigerians are always passionate about life, and they are lively people despite the seemingly challenging circumstances that confront them. Beside socio-cultural

disposition, this is believed to also depend on genetic conditions. Hence, specific genetic endowment has also been identified to interact with socio-cultural elements in determining the levels of happiness among the people. With the help of biological studies, evidences that associate levels of happiness with genetic make-up continue to increase. For example, in a happiness study performed by Minkov and Bond regarding the genetic component to national differences in Happiness in interaction with climate factors as a cultural factor reveals that there is a very significant association between nation's happiness and A allele in the Fatty Acid Amide Hydrolyase (FAAH) gene variant. According to the finding, nations with people of high occurrence of A allele were observed to perceive themselves happier than those with low A allele and *vice versa*. This became even more obvious under certain climate condition. In other words, "this allele helps to prevent the chemical degradation of anandamide, a substance that enhances sensory pleasure and helps to reduce pain [64]". Among the nations with high A allele were Nigeria and Ghana from West Africa, Mexico and Columbia from Northern Latin America compared with their counterparts from Arab nations (Iraq and Jordan) and East Asian nations (Hong Kong, China, Thailand, Taiwan) who showed lesser rates of allele in their genes.

The Nigerian specific culture and the study above with regard to the proteinous element that influence pleasurable and painful feelings in man help to significantly explain why people from poor and underdeveloped nations like Nigeria, Ghana, Mexico and Columbia perceive themselves happier and satisfied in life than others from other countries, even the most developed ones.

7. Conclusion


The striving to find meaning *vis-à-vis* happiness in life is the primary motivational force in man. Socio-cultural factors are strong indicators of happiness in Africa and among Nigerians in particular. Culture which is shared lives, norms, practices, social, moral, religious, aesthetic, economic values, etc. guide the thoughts, feelings and actions of a given people. African culture in particular is very unique in its richness and dynamism. It gives the people the identity and values that single them out as unique people and accounts for their peculiarity of feelings, thoughts and actions. This is obviously revealed in their attitude towards happiness. Despite the myriad of existential challenges that are expected to mar the happiness of African people, they continue to strive for meaningful and happy existence. This can be explained within the context of their socio-cultural experiences exemplified in their close family relationships and general community living, creativity, humorous life seasoned with jokes, and similar cultural values alleviate their worries and avail them the opportunity to overcome the day's difficulties and lessen the weight of negative feelings, while it enhances their happiness. For further studies on basis of happiness especially from African lived experience, it is necessary that other aspects of human existence such as genetic endowments and cognitive processes be given attention.

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The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) as an Indicator of General Well-Being

Rodger K. Bufford, Jessica Cantley, Jaycee Hallford, Yadira Vega and Jessica Wilbur

Abstract

Developed in the context of the subjective well-being movement in the 1970s, the Spiritual Well -Being Scale (SWBS) has stood the test of time. It was conceived within a theistic tradition and embodied the sense of well-being suggested in Biblical texts. The Old Testament greeting and blessing, shalom, seems to convey well the underlying concept of well-being. In this chapter we explore the empirical support and practical significance of the SWBS as a measure of well-being using the notion of biopsychosocial health as proposed by Engel and adapted by Sulmasy to include a religious/spiritual (R/S) dimension as well. Since the 1980s, thousands of studies have been completed and over 20 translations of the scale have been carried out. This chapter will concentrate on research since publication of Paloutzian, et al. Mr. Rogers used to sing, “Everything grows together because we’re all one piece.” Here our thesis is that everything goes together—biopsychosocial and spiritual—because humans function holistically. The SWBS captures this reality well. As a result, the SWBS functions as an index of well-being, an assessment instrument to identify those whose functioning is impaired, and an index of outcomes for interventions that seek to foster well-being.

Keywords: happiness, spiritual well-being, biopsychosocial, religious/spiritual, health

1. Introduction

“Happiness is different things to different people” [1]. Happiness, joy, and subjective well-being are related but distinct concepts. Myers and Diener [2] explored happiness and showed that it is related to “three correlated but distinct factors: the relative presence of positive affect, absence of negative affect, and satisfaction with life” (p. 11). They referred to these together as subjective well-being. Myers and Diener concluded that, among other things, happy people have a meaningful religious faith. In this chapter we examine the link to religious faith or spiritual well-being as shown by research with the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS).

The SWBS is one of the most widely used measures of well-being. A recent search identified over 125,000 citations in peer-reviewed journals in the past decade. Developed by Paloutzian and Ellison [3–5], three factors contributed to the

conceptual background of the SWBS: the social indicators movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the subjective quality of life studies of the 1970s, and the qualitative study of spiritual well-being by Moberg [6]. Moberg theorized that spiritual well-being involved a vertical dimension of relationship to God, and a horizontal dimension of relationship to fellow humans and the material world [6].

The SWBS consists of 20 items. Ten items include explicit references to God and comprise the Religious Well-Being Scale (RWB). The remaining 10 items measure relationship to fellow humans and the material world and comprise the Existential Well-Being Scale (EWB). The SWBS combines RWB and EWB, which are related but distinct measures. Each item is rated on a six-point continuum from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree* with no middle point. About half of the items are worded in reversed form and reverse scored to minimize the role of yay-saying or nay-saying response biases on scores for the scale [3].

2. Psychometrics

2.1 Reliability

Reliability has been extensively examined. Internal consistencies generally range from 0.70 to 0.95 [7–10]. Translations of the SWBS into other languages have found similar internal consistencies despite the challenges involved with language, cultural, and religious differences [9]. Test-retest reliabilities for intervals from 1 to 10 were 73 and above [3, 8, 10], so SWB is fairly stable though we view it as more a state than a trait. Together these data suggest that the SWBS has adequate internal consistency and test-retest reliability.

2.2 Validity

The SWBS items were constructed with content matching the horizontal and vertical dimensions proposed by Moberg [6]. After initial testing and revision, the current 20 items were selected. Expected group differences have been demonstrated e.g., [7, 8] and correlational results confirm that EWB and RWB are distinct but related e.g., [9, 11]. Scores on the SWBS are significantly related in expected directions to a number of indicators of physical, psychological, social, and religious/spiritual (R/S) functioning [7–9, 11–15].

Factor analytic studies have commonly found two factors e.g. [3, 12] but three factors are also reported in some samples [13]. Factor results are characteristics of samples, so this variability can be expected [10].

2.3 Norms

Bufford et al. [8] reported descriptive data on several samples, including college students, persons with mental disorders, and imprisoned convicts. Scores for these samples provide norms for interpreting SWBS scores. Negative skew and ceiling effects are reported for conservative Christian groups [8, 12, 15]. However, the scale has adequate ceiling for most purposes and sufficient range to readily identify low spiritual well-being.

2.4 Practical utility

The SWB scale has demonstrated good utility as a measure of general wellbeing, sometimes referred to as the “shalom principle” [16]; in general, RWB, EWB, and SWB

correlate positively with indicators of physical, psychological, and spiritual health, and negatively with indicators of pathology. In addition to validation studies, the SWBS has been used as an independent/predictor variable and a dependent/criterion variable. The SWBS has been found to be a sensitive barometer of psychological distress [17]. It has also been used successfully as an indicator of change in several outcome studies [17–20]. The primary limitation with the SWB at this time is the inability to distinguish among highly functioning individuals with strong R/S commitments [7, 9]. However, Uhder et al. [21] reported that ceiling effects are common among R/S scales.

2.5 SWBS and Shalom

In modern Hebrew, *shalom* is a greeting and blessing that conveys the wish that the hearer would be well in every way: physical, social, spiritual, psychological, and financial. The SWBS seeks to capture this holistic wellness. While only an indicator, higher scores on the SWBS predict better biopsychosocial and spiritual functioning. In the material that follows we will explore examples of recent findings regarding the relationship of scores on the SWBS to biopsychosocial and religious/spiritual (R/S) functioning.

3. Biological well-being

3.1 Inflammatory bowel disease

A study conducted by Cotton et al. [22] reviewed how children with inflammatory bowel disease compared to those without this disorder with regard to their spiritual well-being and mental state. A total of 155 inflammatory bowel disease patients completed the SWBS, Children's Depression Inventory, and Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory. They found that pediatric patients with IBD had similar levels of religious and existential well-being to those without IBD. However, children with IBD considered spiritual well-being to be more influential on their mental health than healthy individuals did.

3.2 Immunosuppressive treatment

This cross-sectional and descriptive study conducted by Gunes et al. [23] looked at the relationship between SWB and patient's self-reported adherence to immunosuppressive therapy following a liver transplant. Following their surgery, 131 patients completed the SWBS, patient information form, and Immunosuppressive Therapy Adherence Scale (ITAS). They found that individuals who had college degrees had lower SWBS scores, while those 65 years of age or older reported higher SWBS scores and lower treatment adherence. However, a regression analysis found a substantial positive relationship between total SWBS scores and adherence to immunosuppressive therapy. In conclusion, SWB predicted better treatment adherence.

3.3 Breast cancer

In a descriptive study of women with breast cancer, Nakane and Koch [24] examined the role of faith in coping with their diagnosis, enduring their treatment,

and improving their overall experience. Participants completed the SWBS and an interview. The data showed that 67% of participants considered their faith to be an important component of their medical treatment. Participants scored an average of 92% (M = 111.5) on the SWBS. The data were analyzed according to the RWB which resulted in a 100% (M = 60) score among all participants. The participants scored care 85% (M = 51) on the EWB. The study concluded that incorporating faith in cancer care can be beneficial. Particularly, these patients reported that their faith played the most important role in their treatment and positively affected their experience.

3.4 Multiple sclerosis

A cross-sectional and correlational study conducted by Shaygannejad [25] looked at the relationship between SWBS and social support in patients with multiple sclerosis. The Perceived Social Support Inventory and the SWBS were completed by 120 patients. The average score on the SWBS was 87% (M = 104.4) while the perceived social support was 61%. They reported a correlation between the SWBS and perception of social support, particularly for the emotional dimension, which proved to have a greater connection with spiritual well-being than the other two dimensions of social support.

3.5 Coronary artery disease

De Eston Armond et al. [26] conducted a case-control study involving 88 adults; 42 of these individuals were cases and 46 were controls. They gathered demographic information from participants and administered the SWBS. Data analyses did not show a significant difference between the two groups when comparing levels of SWBS and there was no correlation between coronary artery disease and SWB, RWB, and EWB. Both groups demonstrated high scores on RWB, but there was a significant difference in variability between the “case” and “control” groups on EWB. This may be due to lack of clear differentiation between the two groups. This outcome could be related to study design or an SWBS limitation rather than an actual indicator that SWB is not related to coping with coronary artery disease.

Ramesh et al. [27] examined SWBS, worry and anger among 327 patients with coronary artery disease (CAD). SWBS was negatively related to CAD severity, while worry and angry rumination were positively related. They concluded that worry and anger moderated the relationship of spiritual well-being to CAD.

Mashhadimalek et al. [28] examined the association of heart rate variability (HRV), considered a barometer of health, and SWBS among a sample of 31 of Farsi-speaking Muslims. They used cluster analysis to form two groups that differed in SWBS scores. No differences were found in selected HRV indices during the resting phase, but the group with higher SWBS scores differed significantly on selected HRV indices while reading the Quran, indicating increased parasympathetic arousal. Other measures showed the increase in parasympathetic arousal was associated with pleasure and joy. They concluded these findings are consistent with other findings that support a link between R/S and happiness; the HRV findings suggest health gains.

3.6 Traumatic brain injury

Sekely et al. [29] explored how spiritual well-being influenced recovery in individuals who sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Specifically, the study looked at

how SWB influenced depressive and anxious symptoms following a TBI. After a neuropsychological evaluation to confirm their functioning, 83 participants completed the SWBS, Beck Depression Inventory II, and The Beck Anxiety Inventory. They found that there was a negative correlation between the BDI-II score and the EWB score as well as the BAI score and the EWB score [28]. They concluded that EWB may protect TBI patients from anxious and depressive symptoms.

4. Psychological well-being

Through the Triangle of Well-being and Resilience model, Dr. Dan Siegel [30] demonstrates how our mind, brain, and relationships are part of a flowing system, and are consistently and continuously responding to new experiences. We as humans, function holistically, so anything that affects us, affects our whole self. Our psychological well-being is linked to all other facets of our whole self, including physical health, social endeavors, and spirituality. Dr. Carol Ryff was a pioneer in psychological well-being, focusing on well-being beyond medical or biological descriptions. Ryff [31] developed the Six-factor Model of Psychological Well-Being.

The Six-factors of Dr. Ryff's model include self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Lindfors et al. found that Ryff's model was relevant cross-culturally, and data supports the use of a six-factor model [32]. The six relevant factors of psychological well-being described by Ryff [31] give context to parts of a person's life that could also impact or overlap other areas of well-being, such as spirituality. Ryff's multidimensional construct of well-being builds on such concepts such as

"basic life tendencies of Buhler, psychosocial stages of Erikson, personality changes in Neugarten, positive criteria of mental health of Jahoda, account of individuation of Jung, formulation of maturity of Allport, depiction of the fully-functioning person of Rogers, and notion of self-actualization of Maslow" ([33] para. 5).

As explained below, spirituality and religiosity are often primary sources of a person's well-being, and the factors of spirituality tie into all other aspects of well-being, including biopsychosocial well-being and what that means from a religious or spiritual perspective.

Wnuk and Marcinkowski [34] proposed that well-being is multidimensional, echoing Ryff [31]. They found that the meaning of life and hope were directly related to psychological well-being in terms of cognitive and emotional measures, however, only in positive directions. They hypothesized that religiosity, including finding the meaning of life and improving hope, might show a positive influence on psychological well-being [33]. They also found that psychological well-being and its relationship with meaning of life, an aspect of religiosity, played a major role in their participants' quality of life.

As previously discussed, spirituality, health-related behaviors, and psychological well-being all intersect. Božek et al. [33] found that these three particular aspects of life were significantly related in the realm of acquired education. Acquired education in this instance means the subconscious process of retaining knowledge. They found that spirituality and health-related behaviors were linked to psychological well-being and spirituality associations with psychological well-being were stronger in the students who were studying aspects of the human mind and spirit. High levels of

psychological well-being are associated with a “lower risk of depression, a lower possibility of displaying risk behavior, a decreased immune cell expression of a conserved transcriptional response to adversity” ([32], para. 7).

Kamitsis and Francis [35] completed a study to determine how engaging with nature influences psychological health, as well as the role that spirituality plays in the relationship between nature and psychological health. Through surveys, the authors found that “nature exposure and connectedness to nature were positively associated with psychological wellbeing and greater reported spirituality,” which supports previous research ([35], p. 139). The results of this study show how people experience nature, and the impact that connecting with nature can have on spiritual and psychological well-being. It is important to study treatment options involving engagement with nature to determine their effectiveness in increasing spiritual and psychological well-being.

When thinking about psychological health and well-being, trauma and traumatic experiences can play a major role in how someone processes or moves towards a more psychologically healthy state of mind. Park [36] completed a study among 436 college students to determine predictors of three aspects of spirituality, including faith, meaning and peace, and relationships among those spiritual well-being aspects and psychological adjustment after experiencing a traumatic event. The results of their study showed that different patterns of coping with a person’s trauma predict different components of spiritual well-being. Park [36] also found that each of the three aspects of spiritual well-being, faith, meaning, and peace, particularly the latter two, were correlated with psychological adjustment.

The current research puts a rather large emphasis on the relationship between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being. Implications for future research include studying the intersecting relationships among physical, psychological, social well-being and spiritual well-being.

5. Social well-being

5.1 SWB, social support, and suicidality

Gaskin-Wasson et al. [37] explored the relationship between spiritual well-being, depression, suicidality, and interpersonal needs in a sample of African American females who had experienced a suicide attempt and intimate partner violence within the last year. SWB was negatively associated with suicidality, depression, and thwarted interpersonal needs. Thwarted belongingness significantly mediated the relationship between SWB and depression. Results suggest SWB protects against depression and suicidality.

In a sample of 176 adolescents in low-income and marginalized families in Malaysia, Ibrahim et al. [38] found higher levels of RWB, EWB, family support, and friend support were associated with lower levels of suicidal ideation. Lower levels of SWB, RWB, and family support also predicted an adolescent was more likely to report suicidal ideation, suggesting both social and spiritual well-being protect against suicidal ideation.

5.2 SWB, social support, and depression

In a study conducted in Iran during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sharif Nia et al. [39] analyzed the relationship between spiritual well-being, social support, financial

stress, and depressive symptoms. SWB and social support were negatively related to depression levels. Social support indirectly impacted depression through SWB and financial distress, with effects of 12.08% and 13.62% respectively. The effect of SWB on depression accounted for 56.69% of the variance and the effect of SWB on financial distress was 22.09% of the variance. Akbari et al. [40] explored the relationship between social support, SWB, and post-partum depression within mothers in Iran; a comparison group of non-depressed post-partum mothers was utilized. In a sample of 44 mothers with diagnoses of post-partum depression, 73.3% reported perceptions of low social support and 22.7% reported high scores on the SWBS. Among the non-depressed group, 72.4% reported perceptions of high social support and 58% reported high scores on the SWBS. Results across both studies indicate SWB and perception of social support contributed to protecting against depression amid life transition, demonstrating fewer depressive symptoms among participants during a global pandemic and in mothers with post-partum depression.

5.3 SWB and social aspects of health

Soleimani et al. [41] explored the relationship between SWB and death anxiety in survivors of acute myocardial infarction (AMI). Higher levels of social support were positively associated with RWB, EWB, and total SWB. AMI patients with more perceived social support and higher levels of SWB reported less death anxiety. Patients who were single had higher levels of death anxiety than married patients, but SWB was associated with reduced death anxiety among both unmarried and married patients. Results suggest SWB and social support could be considered protective factors for coping with death anxiety and related stress among patients with AMI, and may be most vital for those who are single or lack the additional social support associated with marriage.

5.4 SWB and social health among elders

Mahammadi et al. [42] explored the relationship between spiritual well-being, social health, and capacity for self-care in a sample of elders in community health centers in Iran. Elders with higher levels of social health and SWB had a greater capacity for self-care, with SWB, RWB, and social health predicting self-care capacity. Social health had the highest share in predicting self-care capacity and EWB had no significant effect. Among a sample of elderly residents in China, Chen et al. [43] demonstrated greater levels of perceived social support and fewer depressive symptoms predicted higher levels of SWB. Further, SWB was not directly associated with functional ability, yet perceived social support and depression mediated the relationship between SWB and functional ability. Results from both studies suggest that higher levels of SWB and social support can positively impact personal well-being among elderly populations.

5.5 SWB and social environment

Among a sample of low-income African American mothers, Lamis et al. [44] explored whether EWB and RWB were moderators for neighborhood disorder and parenting stress. EWB predicted greater income, being employed, having a home, and lower probability of receiving treatment for psychiatric conditions. Higher levels of EWB and RWB were also related to fewer reports of experiencing recent

interpersonal violence. Neighborhood disorder was positively related to parenting distress, but those with higher scores on EWB and RWB reported less parenting distress. There was also a significant interaction between EWB and neighborhood disorder. Mothers who reported low levels of EWB reported greater levels of parenting stress regardless of neighborhood disorder, while those who reported high levels of neighborhood disorder also reported high levels of parenting distress despite reporting medium or high levels of EWB. High EWB may be an important protective factor against parenting distress in the presence of social disorder, but does not preclude distress in the face of more serious neighborhood disorder.

6. Religious/spiritual well-being

Paloutzian et al. [10] argued that the inclusion of patient's spiritual well-being (SWB) in healthcare policy is an essential component to a comprehensive program of patient care. Since then, the body of research interested in examining a modern holistic view of the human being has grown to further embrace a spiritual dimension. Of particular interest to the current work, in the last decade researchers have emphasized exploration of the spiritual dimensions of health and its meanings and propose that inclusion of the biopsychosocial-spiritual model in medical practice may have profound effects on patient health, disease, treatments, and cure [45]. As the modern humanistic view of health gains momentum in healthcare, the interest gives way to development of ancillary analyses of patient care experiences including patient-provider relationships, patient subjective experience, and patient decision-making [44]. In this section, we assess the latest movement of the empowerment of patients through inclusion of patient SWB in a variety of healthcare settings. Additionally, we examine whether clinicians' perception of transcendence, or their level of SWB, will enable them to better impact and understand their clients.

As research around spirituality and its influence on overall health expands, it is salient to examine the willingness or resistance of clinicians and patients to incorporate this dimension into their practice. In one experiment, Saad et al. [45] posed the challenge of translating all phrases from the Physician's Pledge on the Declaration of Geneva to a spiritual dimension; following a full translation, researchers found spirituality as a dominant aspect of high standard medical training and clinical practice. As noted by the World Psychiatric Association [46], high-quality physician care is significantly associated to better mental health. This continuum of patient care can be perceived as a transformation of modern medicine due to understanding and inclusion of the human spiritual dimension. Oxhandler and Parrish [47] compared five helping professions' (3500 licensed clinicians) views and behaviors regarding integration of clients' religion and spirituality (R/S) in clinical practice. They found positive attitudes and no variability across professions, indicating helping professionals' openness to spiritual integration in clinical settings.

In another study, researchers examined whether patients wanted their doctors to talk about spirituality. Data from a systemic search in 10 databases including 54 studies and 12,327 patients were used. From their results, Best and Olver [48] concluded that over half the sample thought it was appropriate for the doctor to inquire about spiritual needs, and a majority of the sample expressed interest in discussion of R/S in medical consultations. Salient to note, interest increased with education, personal religiosity, private insurance, less intensity of spiritual interaction, and increased severity of patient illness. These findings suggested that while patients may

be initially resistant to inclusion of spirituality in treatment, they are curious about its effects and may be more willing to engage in a casual inquiry regarding R/S.

While it is apparent that modern healthcare has adopted a shift to emphasize spirituality in treatment, we are curious about the personality traits of individuals who incorporate R/S into their lives, and how this may be applied to overall health and happiness. Particularly, we question whether the character of a clinician can affect the outcome of a patient, and how a clinician's character is influenced by SWB. Beauvais et al. [49] examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and SWB in nursing students using the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS). Results indicated relationships between managing emotion and spiritual and existential well-being. As the definition of EI has been broadened to identifying the feelings of self and others, findings suggest that higher scores on the SWBS indicated higher EI, or what some might call *empathy* [49].

Research by Hosseini et al. [50] incorporated the SWBS to address relationships between psychological hardiness and general/spiritual health and burnout among 312 medical science staff participants. Findings demonstrated that the hardiness variable had a highly significant relationship with spiritual health, meaning that increases in one were associated with increases in the other. These data can be extrapolated from the original idea behind SWB as a need for transcendence; people connected to their spirituality can engage in meaning-making of their experiences, which can provide beneficial effects on coping with difficult events and therefore, increased psychological hardiness. Also notable in this study was the burnout decrease/hardiness increase correlation. If clinicians can avoid burnout, their patients will surely benefit from longevity of treatment and clinician genuineness and competence.

In a recent survey, Levin [51] collected data from the 2010 Baylor Religion Survey from 1714 participants to investigate the prevalence and religious predictors of healing prayer use among US adults. Interestingly, results show that over 75% of adult Americans have prayed for the healing of others and over half have participated in prayer groups [50]. In support of these findings, Pew Research Center [52] gathered data that suggested over 90% of Americans believe in a Higher Power, and over half pray daily, many times for their own and others' healing. Integration of analyses from statistics such as these and various research suggests that humans crave, or are at least curious about spirituality and transcendence, and perceive beneficial effects from some level of SWB. With each adverse circumstance we experience, verifiable mechanisms of change can only encourage healing to a certain extent. Recent research provides promising evidence that clinicians and patients alike identify R/S as a significant factor beyond tangible measures of health that contribute to overall well-being.

Engel [53] showed that differentiation-of-self mediated the relationship between spiritual dwelling and RWB for negative affect but not for positive affect. They concluded that spiritual dwelling fosters well-being through regulation of negative affect.

7. Conclusion

Shalom is found in the biblical texts of Exodus 21–22. In Israel today, when you greet someone or say goodbye, you say, Shalom. You are literally saying, “may you be full of well-being” or, “may health and prosperity be upon you.” This brief review of the SWBS as a measure of the underlying concept of spiritual well-being provides

general support for the thesis that R/S well-being in many ways is consistent with the wishes and blessing associated with shalom. Supporting Engel and Sulmasy [53, 54], persons who score higher on the SWBS tend to cope better with medical adversity such as terminal cancer, experience better psychological health and are less likely to experience mental distress, have better social connections and less social strain, and function in ways that empower them to be a support and resource for those who suffer in these ways. While limited data bears on the direction of causality, there is some indication that spiritual well-being tends to play a causal role in these relationships.

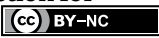
Does spiritual well-being lead to happiness? Not necessarily. First, many of these findings lack the safeguards to ensure causal relationships, though a few findings meet that standard e.g. [18, 19, 55]. Second, spiritual well-being is a broader more experiential and existential quality rather than “the relative presence of positive affect, absence of negative affect, and satisfaction with life” used to define happiness. But the experience of holistic biopsychosocial and spiritual well-being [53, 54] is likely to be associated with a sense of calm, peace, satisfaction, contentment and abundance. At times these are likely to also be accompanied with happiness as well. And R/S engagement is generally associated with these experiences.

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Happiness, Value, and Organizational Toughness: Three Concepts in Search of a Theory

Célio A.A. Sousa and João M.S. Carvalho

Abstract

Happiness—life satisfaction, subjective well-being, or welfare—is generally considered the ultimate goal of life. Research shows that happiness correlates positively with various resources, desirable characteristics, and favorable life circumstances. Happiness can influence productivity, emotions, health, self-esteem, social skills, creativity, hope, or integrity. As such, happiness seems to affect how individuals may go about their personal and professional lives. As complex social systems rely on competencies, attitudes, and behaviors to fulfill their goals, happiness affects organizations and *vice versa* in different ways. Resilience, flexibility, plasticity, and eventually organizational toughness can all be seen as emerging coping properties of complex adaptive systems needed to continue meeting their objectives, despite uncertainty and adversity in turbulent periods. These properties are valuable because they account for enhancing the viability and sustainability of individuals and organizations. However, the conceptual mechanisms through which happiness at work connects to value creation and organizational toughness are in short supply. In this chapter, we provide a conceptual model for addressing this complex relationship.

Keywords: happiness, happy-productive worker thesis, organizational behavior, organizational toughness, theories of value, well-being

1. Introduction

For centuries the contemplation of this desire [happiness] was the exclusive preserve of philosophers and theologians, who speculated and offered prescriptions on ‘the good life’ [1].

Learned men have been writing about happiness since antiquity [2]. In ancient Greek, *eudaimonia* emerged as the most popular proxy word to happiness, next to a constellation of closely related terms such as *eutychia* (lucky), *olbios* (blessed; favored), and *makarios* (blessed; happy; blissful) [3]. In every Indo-European language, the modern words for happiness, as they took shape in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, are all cognate with luck. For instance, there is the Old French *heur* (luck; chance), root of *bonheur* (happiness), and *heureux* (happy); and

the Portuguese *felicidade*, the Spanish *felicidad*, and the Italian *felicità*—all derived ultimately from the Latin *felix* for luck (sometimes fate) [4]. Etymologically, the term happiness has originated from the Middle English and Old Norse word “*happ*,” suggesting chance, that is, happiness would be whatever would happen to someone. Only later, the concept of happiness became also associated with luck and fortune, implying that happiness—that is, being *fortunate*—was then conceived as dependent on events outside human control [4]. Currently, the term is popularly defined as a state of well-being, contentment, and a pleasurable or satisfying experience (Merriam-Webster). Etymology, however, can be misleading because it reflects a socially embedded, contextual, and historical set of commonly accepted beliefs rather than a comprehensive body of scientific knowledge on a specific topic or domain. Definitions in dictionaries are useful interpretative devices for common usage, but they cannot be seen as guiding mechanisms for scientific inquiry. Moreover, such an etymological definition of happiness seems to involve distinctive sets of fundamental assumptions about what constitutes happiness as a reality (ontology) and how to make sense of it (epistemology). On the one hand, it portrays happiness as a state, that is, an attained—or attainable—emotional, mental, or psychological condition. On the other hand, it also depicts happiness as an experience, that is, a gratifying process toward a specific desired state. In this chapter, we argue that the separation of the happiness state (what is) from the happiness process (reaching it) is conceptually unwarranted, artificial, if not flawed or misleading.

The idea of happiness—however, is defined in its specifics—makes a claim about what is most desirable and worthwhile in a person’s life [5]. However, happiness has been regarded as an elusive, contested, incomplete, and fluid concept, just like it has been deemed a much-sought value, aspiration, desire, possibility, expectation, and even a right or entitlement. How people conceive of, evaluate, and pursue (or not) happiness can reveal much about who they are, how and for what they live, and the values they hold dear in a particular context [5]. What is more, throughout history, the concept of happiness has been subject to different interpretations. For instance, in ancient Greece, in the fourth century B.C.E., happiness was seen as an activity of the soul that expressed virtue, whereas the Romans later claimed that happiness is a function of the will, not of external forces, conveying an alternative view on human agency [4]. In the eighteenth century and the values of Enlightenment, the belief in the intimate association of virtue (“mother”) and happiness (“daughter”) was widely shared [4]. The cultural environment created by the Enlightenment promoted an intellectual shift toward the valuation of earthly matters and a reduced commitment to Christian staples such as original sin, making it legitimate to seek happiness and avoid unhappiness [6]. After hundreds of years of Christian emphasis on the afterlife, Western culture started to envision the ideal of human existence predominantly in the earthly realm [7]. What is more, it was also in the eighteenth century that new middle-class work ethic came close to arguing that work should be a source of happiness [6].

Happiness has been influenced by a multitude of sources, including religion, politics, culture, philosophy, and even arts. Unsurprisingly, happiness has been the subject of growing attention from various academic disciplines, including history and anthropology [5, 8, 9], philosophy [10–12], sociology [13–15], psychology [16–18], psychiatry [19–21], economics [22–24], and management [25–27]. Each discipline’s different theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches to systematically examining happiness, its antecedents, nuances, consequences, and its ongoing pervasiveness account for its conceptual richness rather than its weakness.

The concept of happiness is thus amenable to be understood from different theoretical standpoints, none of which has been able to set or claim any moral, ethical, or disciplinary superiority over any other. For instance, some argue that since the study of happiness necessarily draws together considerations of meaning, values, and affect, it strikes a chord at the very heart of the anthropological endeavor. What is more, anthropologists have long recognized that people are generally happiest in those moments when they feel most connected to others [5], suggesting that happiness cannot be thought of as absolute and independent value but as intersubjective and relational. Consequently, happiness is not just one thing; it is polysemic and multifaceted. It means different things in different places, societies, and cultural contexts. As such, there may be no unambiguously single pursuit of happiness but, rather, multiple “pursuits of happiness” [8].

In this contribution, we seek to shed light on a more particular debate, which is especially relevant for organizational scholars: how does (individual) happiness connects to value creation and organizational toughness, and *vice versa*. Organizational scholars are particularly interested in multilevel phenomena happening within and across organizations. Organization studies can be seen as an interdisciplinary academic domain interested in contextualized individual and collective activity and how this relates to organizations, organizing, and management. Relying heavily in insights from major social-sciences disciplines, organization studies look at organizations and organizing as psychological, social, economic, cultural, political, historical, and philosophical phenomena. As organizational scholars, we are particularly interested in investigating topics that are endemic to organizations (e.g., strategy, structure, management, resources, policies, or procedures) and how these aspects affect individual and group behavior, relationships, beliefs, feelings, performance, and outcomes [28, 29].

In this context, economic value creation lies at the heart of modern human societies’ quest for survival. It is through value creation that many human needs and desires are satisfied. Economic value is found in any product that fulfills those needs and wants. In this chapter, a product is conceived as a vehicle for representing any good, service, idea, experience, or information that, having economic value, can be traded in specialized markets. A product is something of value to at least two parties, and, as such, it can be sought and offered by people, groups, or organizations. As we will elaborate further, in addition to economic value, a product may also have social, ecological, and psychological value.

The third construct presented in this chapter is organizational toughness [30]. It has been proposed as a high-order concept that includes other related constructs such as organizational plasticity and strength. Organizational toughness points to the corporate ability to accommodate and adapt to social and natural forces. Thus, a fundamental question arises as to how the happiness of individuals, the creation of value, and organizational toughness can mutually impact each other, eventually contributing to a happier society.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, we provide a brief historical, conceptual overview of happiness from the standpoint of organization studies. Second, we sketch out a theory of value that acknowledges non-fungible or intangible properties, or conditions, which seems particularly suited for discussing how happiness resonates in or through organizational life, creating value. Then, we present the concept of organizational toughness, discussing its connections, tensions, similarities, and differences with close allies, such as plasticity or resilience. Finally, we present a model suggesting the conceptual relationship between the three constructs and their

possible constitutive nature. We conclude by shedding light on future avenues for research regarding this triplet.

2. Happiness: societal and organizational perspectives

Throughout history, happiness has been conceived differently across time and space. For the ancient Greeks, happiness meant virtue, yet dependent on good luck and fortune, or favorable external circumstances. For the Romans, happiness implied prosperity and divine favor, whereas for Christians, happiness was equated with God [31] and, as such, only attainable in the next world. From the age of reason onward, though, authors have been holding the opposite, that is, that the only happiness man can expect to be found on earth [2]. The United States Declaration of Independence of 1776 takes it as a self-evident truth that the pursuit of happiness is an unalienable right comparable to life and liberty [22].

In recent decades, happiness has been the subject of growing attention from various academic disciplines, media, and governments. People's happiness—that is, citizens—has been hailed as the true measure of (societal) progress [32]. The ideal and pursuit of happiness became omnipresent in our daily lives. In the West, happiness is about feeling good; it denotes a preponderance of positive over negative affect and a general sense of contentment or satisfaction with life [5]. Happiness is everywhere: on TV and the radio, in books and magazines, at the gym, in food and diet advice, in hospitals, at work, at war, in schools, in universities, in technology, on the web, in sports, at home, in politics, and, of course, on market's shelves too [33]. This recent and widespread upsurge of public attention to the happiness, which some regard as the “happiness turn” [34], has not been immune to critique. Happiness is more intrinsically appealing and less threatening than competing themes such as sadness, depression, anxiety, stress, or burnout. And, apart from some notable exceptions [33, 35–38], it is probably hard to find anyone against happiness. Happiness haunts our cultural imaginary, and, as such, it is becoming both a contemporary romanticized obsession, a new moral regime, and a political concept [33].

2.1 Societal value of happiness: from individual virtue to collective value

On 19 July 2011, Bhutan sponsored resolution 65/309, “Happiness: Towards a holistic approach to development,” adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, inviting national governments to “*give more importance to happiness and well-being in determining how to achieve and measure social and economic development*” [39]. Since then, Bhutan's now-famous “Gross National Happiness” index has been widely heralded as an alternative to gross national product and other conventional measures of prosperity and growth for arriving at policy decisions and measuring progress [5].

On April 2, 2012, the first World Happiness Report presented evidence from the emerging science of happiness for the “*Defining a new economic paradigm: The report of the high-level meeting on well-being and happiness.*” And on June 28, 2012, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 66/281, proclaiming March 20th as the International Day of Happiness to be observed annually. The World Happiness Report is now released every year around this date as part of the International Day of Happiness celebration [39].

Happiness is typically defined by how people experience and evaluate their lives as a whole [40]. In contrast, well-being is defined as people's positive evaluations of their lives, including positive emotions, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning [41]. Current research on well-being has been derived from two general perspectives: the *hedonic* approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance; and the Aristotelian *eudaimonic* approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning [16]. When used in a broad sense, the term happiness is thus synonymous with "quality of life" or "well-being" [42], terms we use interchangeably in this chapter. During the last half-century, happiness, and happiness-related topics, *viz.* (subjective) well-being [16, 18, 23], and life satisfaction [43–45] of individuals and populations, have been the object of independent inquiries across the globe. Questions on happiness—or well-being—have been used in large-scale survey studies, such as the General Social Survey in the USA (since 1972), the Eurobarometer in the European Union (since 1974), or the German Socioeconomic Panel (since 1984). In 2006, for instance, the Pew Research Center issued a technical report entitled "*Are we happy yet?*". Based on 3014 telephone interviews conducted in English and Spanish with a representative sample of adults, ages 18 or older, living in the continental U.S. did not look at life events or psychological characteristics but at happiness by demographic and behavioral traits [46]. Afterward, in 2010, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) set up the "*Better Life Initiative: Measuring Well-Being and Progress*," aiming to evaluate the diverse experiences and living conditions of people and households in all 37 OECD countries. The initiative covers 15 dimensions, including perceived quality of health, subjective well-being, social connections, natural capital, safety, jobs, and incomes [47]. And other supranational organizations such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Commission, or global consultancy firms (e.g., Gallup) have all been directing attention—and resources—to the topic of happiness, well-being, or life satisfaction. Consequently, some argue that policymakers and businesses are increasingly making decisions and crafting policies based on such well-being measures [32, 48]. Across the board and the globe, the happiness of individuals is progressively considered *the* true measure of economic, social, and political progress [14, 39].

It comes as no surprise that that developing, testing, and applying multidimensional surveys for subjective measuring happiness have become a focal point in this debate. Discussions on *how to* objectify or measure happiness come in many shapes and colors. Psychologists have long differentiated between an affective (or emotional) component and a cognitive (or judgmental) component of happiness or well-being. However, social conditions for happiness have been studied at the *macro*-levels of nations, *meso*-level of organizations, and *micro*-levels of individuals [42]. Empirical work on happiness uses surveys of people's perceptions of their lives, and the questions vary: "*Generally speaking, how happy are you with your life?*" (i.e., affective component) or "*Generally speaking, how (much) satisfied are you with your life?*" (i.e., cognitive component) [36]. The responses, though not unproblematic, are meaningful and reasonably comparable among various groups of individuals [1]. It should thus come as no surprise that answers vary across nations [42], and according to perceived institutional quality [49], individual freedom [50], socioeconomic status [42], economic freedom [51, 52], social networks [53], housing conditions [54], equality [55], age [56, 57], education [58, 59], or health [60, 61].

2.2 Organizational happiness: determinants and implications

Happiness has become a ubiquitous topic in all societal domains, and organizations are no exception. We live in an organizational society [62]. Therefore, since much of our life is spent in organizations, namely workplaces, concerns about whether—and if so, how—happiness relates to organizational life [42]. What is more, the role that employment and workplace experiences play in shaping happiness for individuals has also been under scrutiny [63]. Paid work activities can provide enjoyable activities and a structure for the day, social contact, a means of achieving respect, and a source of engagement, challenge, and meaning [41]. Happiness in the form of pleasant moods and emotions, well-being, and positive attitudes has been attracting increasing research attention [26]. Research suggests that work and employment drive happiness, and happiness makes people more productive [40]. Moreover, the relationship between happiness and employment is deemed as mutually constitutive as it runs in both directions.

Organizational researchers have been generally focused on grasping the ins and outs of happiness at work and, mainly, on making sense of its causes and consequences. Theoretical foundations of this interest are to be found mostly in psychology and economics. In psychology, setpoint theory gained some academic attention before positive psychology—or science of happiness [64–66]—took over in the early 2000s, making inroads into numerous disciplines, including business and management. From a setpoint theory standpoint, individuals are believed to have a fixed setpoint of happiness or life satisfaction determined by genetics or personality, to which they usually return after temporary disturbances due to favorable or unfavorable external events [67]. Differently, positive psychology suggests that unprecedented levels of happiness can be reached as long as ordinary human strengths and virtues such as optimism, kindness, generosity, joy, honesty, originality, courage, empathy, flow, humor, gratitude, resilience, zestful work, and wellness can be nurtured [64, 66]. In contrast, when addressing happiness, economics draws on the importance of life circumstances—mainly on one’s income and employment situation—to well-being [1].

Numerous studies have shown that happiness is associated not only with, for example, physical well-being, strong immune systems, longevity, satisfying human relationships, but also with work-related aspects such as effective coping, creativity, productivity, and higher earnings [68]. The notion of happiness—and well-being—at work is becoming increasingly important for organization scholars [25, 26, 69–77]. Research has shown that high levels of well-being at work are good for the organization *and* the employee, as they tend to imply, for example, lower sickness-absence levels, better retention, more satisfied customers [70], and positive work behaviors [41]. Well-being at work not only is desirable as an end in itself, but also can help to produce greater economic productivity [41].

For many years, organizational behavior scholars have studied a number of constructs that appear to have a considerable overlap with the broad concept of happiness, including organizational commitment, job involvement, engagement, thriving and vigor, affect at work, and job satisfaction, the latter being the most central and frequently used concept [26].

Happiness at work includes, but is far more than, job satisfaction. The causes of workers happiness, well-being, positive moods, and emotions are multifaceted. A host of diverse contextual, environmental, and job-related factors has been implicated in this relationship, including low noise levels [78], air pollution [79],

positive behaviors of the supervisor [80], promotional opportunities, pay and benefits satisfaction, performance appraisal satisfaction, training, and workload [81], workplace health culture [82], employee involvement and participation [83], organizational climate [84], inclusive leadership [85], quality of work life [86], corporate volunteering activities [87], high-performance work systems [88], career success [89], work-life balance strategies [90], corporate social responsibility [91], organizational culture [92], organizational justice [93], organizational trust and organizational support [94], organizational benevolence [95], workplace relationships [96], type of occupation and working hours [97], person-job fit [98], job resources [99], job characteristics (*viz.*, task significance, skill variety, task identity, feedback, autonomy) [100], and meaningful work [101].

Happiness and positive attitudes do not directly result from all these factors but rather from individuals' subjective perceptions, interpretations, and appraisals of those factors. Appraisals, in turn, are to be influenced not just by the objective nature of those constructs, but also by dispositional characteristics, expectations, attributions, and social influence. Happiness at work results from both personal and environmental factors [26]. The existence of any of, or a combination of some of those situational factors, may contribute to individual's positive moods, emotions, and well-being at work, but it is insufficient to fully explain it. Research suggests that social and affective influence abound in groups, playing a key role in the positive moods and emotions of their members [102]. The conscious or unconscious process through which individual or group moods, emotions, or behaviors influence the moods, emotions, or behaviors of other individuals or groups is known as emotional contagion [103]. In organizations and workplaces, people do not live in emotional islands. Group members experience moods at work, and these moods ripple out. In the process, these moods influence not only other group members' emotions, but also their group dynamics and individual cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors as well [104].

Happiness is believed to have an impact across multiple life domains, including marriage, friendship, income, work performance, and health [17]. Now, we turn our attention to the potential implications of happiness, and happiness-related topics to work and organizational life. In so doing, we seek to shed light into the potential *value* of happiness to organizations.

Since the 1930s there is a great deal of interest in the relationship between well-being and productivity [105]. The so-called "*happy-productive worker thesis*" [105–107] has long fascinated organizational scholars and practitioners alike. According to this contested [108–110] yet highly popular thesis, all things being equal, happy workers show higher levels of job-related performance behaviors than unhappy workers. In other words, happy workers perform better and are thus more productive than non-happy workers. Unsurprisingly, it almost became a truism to say—or claim—that a happy worker is more productive. Knowing whether happiness promotes productivity has important implications for management and strategies for workplace improvements [105].

A considerable amount of person-level and organizational-level empirical research involving happiness-related constructs and work outcomes suggests that positive attitudes and experiences are associated with beneficial consequences for both employees and organizations [26]. Happy and state positive moods among workers have been positively associated with creativity [111], productivity and profitability [41], job performance [75], organizational citizenship behavior [71], innovative behavior [112], job satisfaction [113], career success [114], efficiency gains and productivity [115], employee or work engagement [116], reduced absenteeism and

withdrawal [117], organizational learning [71], employee retention [118], knowledge sharing [119], cognitive flexibility [120], workplace cooperation and collaboration [121], organizational commitment [122], problem-solving and decision-making [17], intrinsic and extrinsic motivation [123], proactive behavior [124], customer satisfaction, and perceived service quality [125].

What emerges from these findings is that the discussions about the implications of happiness, subjective well-being, or positive affect to organizations and employees has become less a matter of hope, optimism, or wishful thinking, and more about, for example, scales' validity and reliability, levels of analysis (transient experiences, stable person-level attitudes, and collective attitudes) and multiple foci (discrete events, the job, and the organization) [26]. Unsurprisingly, skepticism exists as to whether any of those scales, however complex they might be, can realistically capture the essence and value of happiness. Recognizing its relevance to organizations is not at odds with the accredited difficulty of understanding or measuring it fully. Moreover, the importance of conceptual and empirical research on happiness lies in supplying "eye-openers" to possible connections, controversies, and conflicts between the foundations of well-being at work and its positive outcomes, at both individual and organizational levels. At all levels, there is mounting evidence that happiness is associated with positive and successful valuable outcomes [126]. We turn now our attention to the mechanisms through which product value is created.

3. Theorizing value: beyond the triple bottom line

In modern societies, people look for and buy products—*viz.* goods, services, ideas, information, experiences—to fulfill their needs and desires, providing that these can meet expected or desired value. The absolute, relative, or comparative value individuals ascribe to products can be seen as an appropriate measure of their perceived utility or meaning at different affective or cognitive levels. Accordingly, individuals can distinguish products according to different layers of value, for example, personal, societal (community-level), and environmental (planet-preservation level).

An extensive analysis of traditional theories of value has been performed [30]. This analysis defines value creation as the utility a product can provide to individuals, linked to satisfying their needs and desires [127]. We also focus on the concept of distributed or perceived value of use, defined as the difference between the total value and the total cost of the product. The distributed or perceived value of use may also include experiences, sensations, and mental states. The total cost to the customer comprises all types of costs: financial (price, ability to pay, opportunity cost) and nonfinancial (physical, psychological, and social aspects related to the use of the product, such as accessibility, embarrassment, usability, etc.).

Economic value exists in all types of products. Customers' satisfaction lies at the core of the economic value of a product [128]. For the organization, this value consists of cash flow and/or non-financial profit through effectively fulfilling its mission. There may also be economic value for society, resulting from job creation and wealth growth, as well as economic externalities, which various stakeholders share.

Social value relates to the well-being of individuals, communities, and the environment [129]. Additionally, social value meets basic and lasting needs, such as food, water, shelter, education, and medical services to those in need [129]. However, competing views have been proposed [130, 131]. For these authors, the social value may or may not exist in products. Social value is intertwined with other types of

values. Still, it relates mainly to social impacts, like processes of socialization, social inclusion, equal opportunities, health and/or safety in the community, and the quality of life of the society.

Ecological value is related to the natural environment, biodiversity, sustainability, and protection of the planet. Avoiding a negative ecological footprint has become a general concern since people's quality of life depends on how the products are produced and consumed. However, this type of value may not exist in a product.

The fourth is psychological or transformational value [130, 131]. Since it may also comprise social impact, most scholars tend to equate psychological with social value. However, sociology and psychology have different traditions and objects of study. The subjective concept of value is to be found at the individual rather than at the social level, as it is unwarranted to measure product utility (value of use) collectively [132]. Consequently, the psychological value may resonate at the individual level through attitude and behavioral change. This change happens when products influence, for instance, additive behaviors, healthier or ecological lifestyle, discrimination awareness, change of mentality, openness to new ideas, improved knowledge or new skills, self-realization, self-esteem, or self-efficacy. The potential transformations these products involve may, or may not have any significant social impact, as it frequently occurs with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Growing public awareness did not result in reduced consumption, that is, significant behavioral changes. Moreover, similar products may impact persons differently, which is shared with social products and medicines. Thus, if a product may include any psychological value, it should be openly disclosed by organizations.

The separation between products' social and psychological value has been acknowledged [131, 133]. Research suggests that people are mainly self-concerned with the products' values for themselves rather than their particular social value [133]. Studies also indicate that social products appear to be more valuable in people's perceptions. Findings from a survey with more than 800 university students in Portugal suggest that tobacco, mobile phone, Internet, libraries and museums, schools/education, foster care, domiciliary support, and disability support services are perceived to impact their life more significantly than their social environment [133]. In sum, individuals may acknowledge four types of product value, illustrating the tetrad-value theory. All products have economic value, and many of them also have ecological, social, and psychological values. Now, we turn our attention to the concept of organizational toughness, discussing its connections, tensions, similarities, and differences with close allies, such as plasticity or resilience.

4. Organizational toughness: beyond resilience, flexibility, and plasticity

Organizations are critical players in modern societal landscapes, facing multiple risks (e.g., financial, strategic, technological, market, competitive, reputational, environmental, political, and economic). However, if organizational risks are to be fully understood, then the systemic risks related to the possibility of occurring a pandemic, terrorist threats, revolutions, natural disasters, or strikes in sectors of activity that immobilize one's business should also be taken into account. Systemic risks may hamper organizations' production for at least two other reasons: (1) Governments can adopt preventive laws aiming at protecting workers from contagion or physical damage and (2) disturbances across value chains or infrastructures and facilities. These adverse situations call for novel preventive management behaviors,

requiring alternative approaches to organizations' survival strategies. In the context of the COVID pandemic, unplanned and untested organizational solutions have been adopted to keep up with the production of goods and services.

Organizational approaches to risk, plasticity, and resilience, that is, corporate coping mechanisms with turbulence, uncertainty, and complexity, coalesce around the concept of organizational toughness [30]. This concept emerged from a particular stream of management research, which draws on four properties of materials studied in physics to explain business phenomena: resilience, flexibility, plasticity, and toughness. First, resilience is defined as the ability of a material to absorb energy when it is deformed elastically, a combination of strength and elasticity [134, 135]. Second, flexibility is defined as the ability of an object to bend or deform in response to an applied force [136]. Third, plasticity is defined as the ability of a material to undergo irreversible or permanent deformation without breaking or rupturing [137–139]. And fourth, toughness relates to the capability of materials to absorb energy or withstand shock and plastically deform, without fracturing, as a combination of strength and plasticity [30]. Thus, during uncertain and turbulent periods, the comparative advantage of the concept of Organizational Toughness is that beyond (organizational) resilience, flexibility, and plasticity, and it captures the possibility of organizations to evolve and become different and better adapted to the future uncertainty. As the theory of material properties suggest, toughness combines plasticity and strength. Thus, by analogy, the concept of Organizational Toughness includes the concepts of Organizational Plasticity and Organizational Strength. The concept or organizational toughness evolved from the literature, as extant ideas were unable to represent what was taking place to organizations adequately during the pandemic period [30].

Therefore, Organizational Toughness is represented by two other constructs: organizational plasticity and organizational strength. Organizational plasticity also includes two constructs: staff preparation and structure adapted to change. In turn, the former presents, as manifest variables, staff flexibility, competencies, and motivation, while the latter includes strategic planning, leadership, and market-oriented organizational learning. Organizational strength comprises internal and external availability of resources as manifest variables [30]. Next, these extant constructs and concepts are described.

Organizational plasticity relates to organizational adaptability, flexibility, or agility. The idea of plasticity has been introduced to specify how organizations define their strategic planning [140]. The concept of plasticity has its roots in psychological approaches, emphasizing different reactions that individuals present to similar circumstances [137, 140–142]. The link between agile thinking and organizational plasticity development [138, 143] enhances strategic agility or organization plasticity [144]. Organizational change can be seen as the combination of organizational agility and resilience, resulting in the ability to respond to fast and/or disruptive changes in the market and sustain future organizational success [134]. In this context, human resource flexibility is an essential dynamic organizational capability [145–147], which is studied *via* three components: employee skills, employee behavior, and human resource practices [148]. These variables positively impact organizational performance [147, 148] when organizations face new environment situations.

Competencies and motivation add to staff flexibility. Skilled and motivated workers can adjust their behaviors more quickly to new activities or situations [145, 149]. Competencies can be defined as a set of capabilities, skills, knowledge, experience, and effort that can result in higher levels of performance [150]. Employees' competencies are critical to developing flexible or agile organizations [151, 152], as well

as employees' adaptability [153], flexibility [147], and agility [154]. A broad set of workers' competencies helps organizational adjustment to changes in the market or the environment [147].

Nevertheless, competencies are only meaningful if employees experience well-being and are motivated to change and act [75, 112, 123]. A turbulent or disruptive situation can lead to demotivating factors such as fear or loss of income. Neuroscience and psychology suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations shape work plasticity and behaviors [138, 155, 156]. Skilled employees may lack the behavioral motivation to change [146]. Better disposal of their competencies, practical activities, rewards, and recognition may improve employees' motivation. Moreover, workers need to be embedded in an organization with a structure adapted to change; otherwise, their skills, motivation and flexibility could thwart.

In the scope of an organizational structure adapted to change, "*Strategic planning is critical to developing adaptive and/or innovative processes between the organization's resources and capabilities and its market objectives, opportunities and threats*" [150] (p. 175). Strategic agility is the capability of an organization to continuously adjust the strategic direction and develop innovative ways to create value [157]. This dialectic approach is essential to a balanced strategic plan, which tries to predict a roadmap for the organization to achieve its goals and objectives and tries to forecast a contingency plan to deal with uncertainties and unexpected events. In this context, leadership is crucial to developing a strategic plan. Organizational survival becomes facilitated when the leadership is well adapted to diverse situations and the situational workers' context [150].

From a behavioral plasticity standpoint, research shows that ethical leadership is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior and negatively associated with deviant behaviors [158]. Agile-thinking leaders may predict and analyze environmental problems and more easily cope with them, using different and innovative approaches [138]. They should promote workers' flexibility, agility, and adaptability to handle a changing and unpredictable business environment [159]. Market-oriented organizational learning is also crucial in any context [150]. This strategic approach is based on a strategic plan that promotes learning at all levels, individual, collective, and organizational. Organizational learning is a process by which organizations learn through interaction with their environments [160], creating knowledge capital through four activities [161]: (1) constant challenge to the organization's practices and beliefs, reflecting an attitude of openness of mind; (2) formal and informal commitment to learning and training; (3) sharing a vision; and (4) practices related to information research, experimentation, and innovation. These practices are also based on behavioral plasticity [162]. These characteristics should be market-oriented to produce successful organizational outcomes [161], namely in dealing with environmental turbulence [163, 164]. Thus, an organization needs an effective information system (generation, dissemination, analysis) with inter-functional coordination to respond to market turbulence and unexpected events [161]. An organization that presents flexible strategic planning and leadership that fosters market-oriented organizational learning can achieve competitive advantage and be more successful in the face of all market changes.

In sum, the construct of Organizational Plasticity is bracketed with two other ideas: (1) "Structure adapted to change" and all types of contingencies [134, 165], which calls for a versatile and agile leadership [159], flexible strategic planning to timely develop adaptive and/or innovative processes [150, 157], and market-oriented organizational learning [162–164]; and (2) "Staff preparation" that is based on

workers' flexibility [145, 147], competencies [151, 152], and motivations [155, 156]. As such, Organizational Plasticity is defined as the ability of an organization to change irreversibly and permanently its strategic approach to the markets to survive and/or grow under different environmental conditions (adaptability) and pressures (flexibility) and be able to timely and effectively (agility) react to threats and proactively seize opportunities [30].

Organizational Strength relates to organizations' ability to obtain internal and external physical, human, intellectual, and financial resources [166, 167] and capabilities [147, 148, 168], which are dependent on the environment [169], and transforming them into products with economic value [30, 159]. All resources should be planned for easy access, preventing unexpected problems. It is also important to assess organizational resource flexibility, considering the possibility of using the resources differently and transforming or combining them to apply in different situations [166, 168].

New scales were developed, tested, and validated to measure these variables in the Portuguese clothing sector, one of the most affected during the COVID pandemic [170]. Moreover, this empirical study shows that the construct of Organizational Toughness and its components—Organizational Plasticity and Organizational Strength—present a statistically significant impact on the Economic and Social Sustainability of the organizations. However, it was impossible to discriminate between Staff Preparation and Structure Adapted to Change. Nevertheless, all the variables of these two aspects contribute to the construct of Organizational Plasticity. Results show that all the predicted variables are essential to organizational survival and success: flexible strategic planning, company leadership, learning quickly with the context to be more adaptable to the market, high workers' competencies, motivation, and flexibility, and internal and external availability of resources.

Thus, organizations should prepare the logistics of their resources to continue producing, avoiding, for instance, just-in-time strategies. The companies' owners or managers should develop an organizational culture that considers a market-oriented perspective to learn how to be close to the clients' needs in any environment. Survival and success require flexible strategic planning, adjusted leadership, and effective personal recruitment and training that properly comprehends the needed competencies, motivation, and flexibility to address turbulent times or unexpected events.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Happiness has been the subject of growing attention from various academic disciplines, media, and governments. In societal terms, happiness has been hailed as *the* accurate measure of economic, social, and political progress [14, 32, 39]. Happiness has become a ubiquitous topic in all societal domains, and organizations are no exception. As much of adult life is spent in formal work organizations, the happiness *discourse* has received growing attention from organizational scholars. The so-called "*happy-productive worker thesis*" [105–107] has long fascinated scholars and practitioners alike, as it suggests that, all things being equal, happy workers show higher levels of job-related performance behaviors than unhappy workers. Well-being at work is good for the organization *and* the employee, making it not only ethically warranted, but also economically desirable. In other words, the mutually constitutive nature of the "happiness-positive work outcomes" relationship creates *value* for individuals and organizations alike, and eventually also to society at large. Given the

apparent connections between happiness and value, both at individual and organizational levels, in this chapter we discuss how individual happiness connects to value creation, and, eventually, to organizational toughness.

In organizations, just like in any other life domain, happiness is not given. At best, it can be seen as resulting from an ongoing interplay between the dispositional characteristics of employees, the contextual, environmental, job-related, and social influences at work. What is more, happiness, positive moods, emotions, and positive attitudes do not result from all these influences directly, but rather from individuals' subjective and transient perceptions, interpretations, and appraisals of those factors. Therefore, if we are to take the prospects and value of happiness to organizations seriously, then attempts to untangle (individual) dispositional traits from (work) processes and (organizational) contexts may fall short of their potential. Happiness at work is likely to be found at the intersection of different yet mutually constitutive layers: the affective (or emotional) and the cognitive (or judgmental) factors; the personal and environmental factors; the objective and subjective perceptions, interpretations, and appraisals; and the individual, group, and organizational levels.

Happy workers are believed to perform better (qualitatively) and more productively (quantitatively) than non-happy workers. Research suggests positive associations between happiness with valuable organizational outcomes. While these outcomes come in many shapes and colors, we find it particularly useful and instructive to order them along a continuum with two extremes: affective and cognitive levels (see **Table 1**). From an *affective* viewpoint, happiness stimulates positive attitudes, values, emotions, or behaviors that are relevant for work-context directly and work processes indirectly. Inversely, from a *cognitive* standpoint, happiness stimulates positive work-processes directly and work-context indirectly.

The potential combined effect of these affective and cognitive influences on workers may ripple out to society at large for at least two reasons. First, individuals do not live on emotional islands; positive moods influence others' emotions, dynamics, attitudes, and behaviors [104]. Second, workers are also citizens and consumers, who look for and buy products—*viz.* goods, services, ideas, information, experiences—in order to fulfill their needs and desires. This suggests that happy workers might also become happier citizens and better-informed consumers. This is not to say that the reverse influence is immaterial; this is not the case, as clearly outlined earlier in this chapter.

Happiness affective outcomes	Happiness cognitive outcomes
Creativity [111]	Productivity and Profitability [41]
Organizational Citizenship behavior [71]	Organizational Learning [71]
Innovative Behavior [112]	Knowledge Sharing [119]
Job Satisfaction [113]	Cognitive Flexibility [120]
Employee Engagement [116]	Problem-Solving and Decision-Making [17]
Workplace Cooperation and Collaboration [121]	Customer Satisfaction and Perceived Service Quality [125]
Organizational Commitment [122]	Job Performance [75]
Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation [123]	Career Success [114]
Proactive Behavior [124]	Efficiency Gains and Productivity [115]

Table 1.
Affective and cognitive value levels of happiness at work.

The question we pose ourselves, however, points to a different angle of analysis: how individual happiness connects to value and, eventually, to organizational toughness. Thus, it appears plausible to argue that the absolute, relative, or comparative value that workers ascribe to products (as consumers) is at least partly influenced by their affective and cognitive appraisals of context, utility, and meaning. The combination of these higher-level aspects seems to resonate in the tetra-value theory, as this adds a psychological dimension to the traditional approaches to value, drawing attention to the interrelatedness of economic, social, ecological, and psychological value [130, 131].

Organizational approaches to risk, plasticity, and resilience, that is, the mechanisms organizations adopt to cope with turbulence, uncertainty, and complexity, coalesce around the novel concept of organizational toughness [30]. Relying on the properties of materials, toughness illustrates the capability of materials to absorb energy or withstand shock and plastically deform, without fracturing, as a combination of strength and plasticity [30]. The concept of organizational toughness relies, too, on motivations, behavioral change, adaptive agility, and competences. In other words, organizational toughness rests on a subtle combination of affective (virtually unmanageable) and cognitive (partially manageable) elements. In turbulent or disruptive situations, it takes more than competences to adapt and change. It takes well-being and motivation to change and act [75, 112, 123]. Accordingly, employees' happiness may well be the missing conceptual ingredient link that connects value with organizational toughness, well beyond resilience, flexibility, and plasticity.

In order to provide a foothold for the conceptual relationships addressed in this contribution, which may also serve as a beacon for further conceptual and empirical research in the field, the model "Happiness Value Model" (HAVAM) is proposed (Figure 1). This model rests, solely, on the mutually constitutive nature of happiness at work and positive work-related outcomes, and its ripple-out effect to society at large.

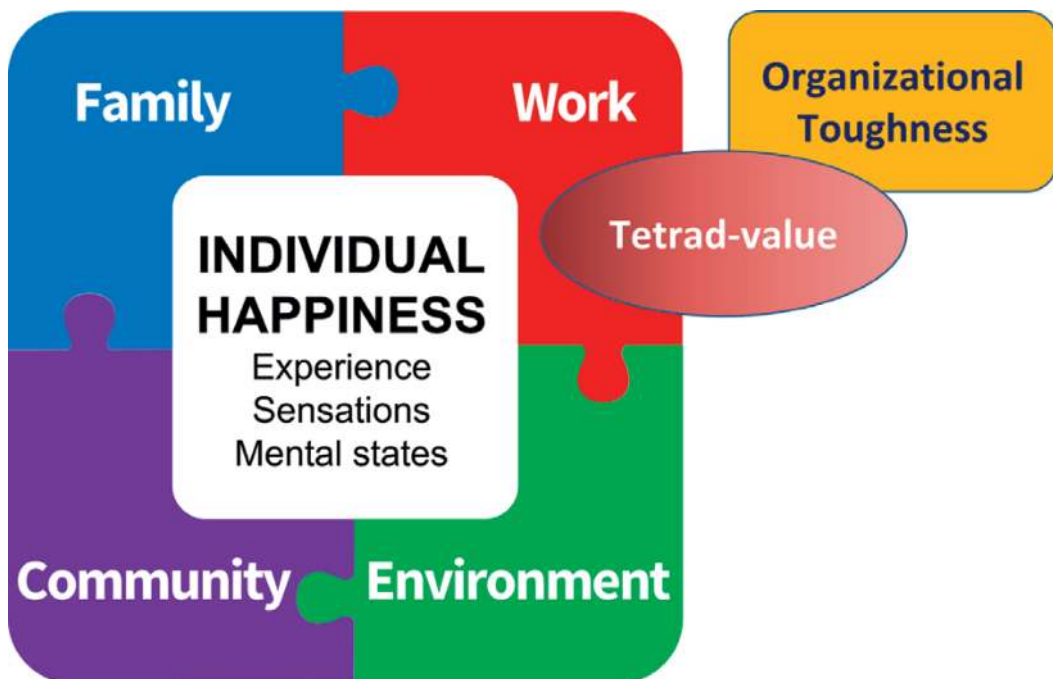


Figure 1.
Happiness value model—HAVAM.

The HAVAM model brings together aspects that acknowledge the conceptual mechanisms through which happiness at work connects to value creation and eventually to organizational toughness. The model concedes that individual happiness relates to organizational life and value in different layers, forms, and textures, and that this has wider implications for how organizations can deal with uncertainty in turbulent periods. The HAVAM provides a novel and complementary view on the relevant implications of happiness to organizations and society.

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Conflict of interest

We have no conflict of interest to declare.

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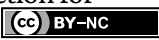
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Amartya Sen and the Capabilities versus Happiness Debate: An Aristotelian Perspective

Tony Burns

Abstract

This chapter discusses Amartya Sen's capabilities approach to human development from the standpoint of the concept of happiness. It locates Sen's work against the background of the recent capabilities versus happiness debate. Sen's version of the capabilities approach is commonly regarded as a critique of the happiness approach to development ethics. It is sometimes assumed that he attaches no importance at all to the value of happiness. I argue that this view misrepresents what Sen has to say about the value of happiness in his writings. A distinctive feature of Sen's views on this subject is that he agrees with the view that happiness is nothing more than subjective mental state and rejects the idea of objective happiness. This distinguishes his version of the capabilities approach from the ethical eudaimonism of both Aristotle and John Stuart Mill. The chapter concludes by suggesting that Sen could and should have taken this idea more seriously than he does.

Keywords: Amartya Sen, capabilities approach, happiness, well-being, Aristotle, eudaimonia

1. Introduction

A great deal has been written by and about the Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen in the last two or three decades. In that time much has also been written about the capabilities approach in development studies, including Sen's version of it. Indeed, there is now an academic journal devoted to it, the *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, which commenced publishing in the year 2000, changing its name to the current title in 2009.

Similarly, a great deal has also been written in the same period about the concept of happiness and its relevance for students of economics. Not all of the contributors to this literature are enthusiasts for the value of happiness, or for a happiness approach to human well-being and development, although many of them are. Here it should be noted that there are, broadly speaking, two different versions of it, based on the notions of objective happiness and subjective happiness respectively. The difference between these is that for proponents of the former one can be mistaken about one's own happiness, whereas according to proponents of the latter one cannot be. On that view, individuals are the best judges of what their own happiness involves.

Again, this burgeoning literature on the economics and politics of happiness has led to the creation of a new academic journal, *The Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, which also commenced publication in the year 2000. As the wording of this title suggests, the editors of this journal lean in the direction of what I have called the subjective happiness approach. A good example of somebody who endorses this approach would be Richard Layard, who provides an accessible account of it in his *Happiness: Lessons From a New Science* (2005) [1].

Given the above, it is not too surprising that some scholars have attempted to bring these two different bodies of literature together. In the last 15 years or so, a number of conferences and workshops, and associated special issues of academic journals, have been devoted to this theme. These include symposia in the *Review of Social Economy* (2005); *Utilitas* (2006); *The Journal of Socio-Economics* (2010); and *The International Review of Economics* (2020). A significant event here was the publication of a volume edited by Luigino Bruni, Flavio Comim and Maurizio Pugno, entitled *Capabilities and Happiness* in 2008 [2]. I shall refer to this general effort as the capabilities versus happiness debate, which commenced in 2005 and continues to the present.

This chapter has five parts. In part one I offer an account of the subjective happiness approach to development studies. In part two I turn to consider Amartya Sen's version of the capabilities approach, which was initially put forward by him as a critique of the subjective happiness approach. In part three I consider what Sen has to say about the value of subjective happiness and his understanding of part which the concept has to play in the capabilities approach as he understands it. In part four I scrutinise the efforts which have been made by some scholars to synthesise the capabilities approach and the subjective happiness approach into a third approach, which is claimed to have the strengths of each and the weaknesses of neither. Finally, in part five, I consider some possible criticisms of Sen's own understanding of the concept of happiness and its significance, when assessed from the standpoint of Aristotle's ethical eudaimonism and its notion of objective happiness.

2. The happiness approach to human development and well-being

The happiness approach comes in two significantly different forms, namely the subjective happiness and the objective happiness versions respectively. The contributors to the capabilities versus happiness debate usually (though not always) have in mind the notion of subjective rather than that of objective happiness. On that view, happiness is identical with subjective well-being. It is a matter of having pleasurable sensations or experiences, which might be characterised by the expression 'feeling good.' As such, it is something that is veridically self-reported. For those who think in this way about happiness, it is not possible for any individual agent to be mistaken about their own situation, so far as their happiness (or otherwise) is concerned. This way of thinking about happiness runs counter to a very old view, which can be traced back at least to the writings of Aristotle, if not before, according to which happiness (or eudaimonia) is at least in part an objective state of affairs. On that view, individual agents can indeed be mistaken as to what will make them really or truly happy. I shall say something about Sen, eudaimonism and the notion of objective happiness in part five.

I shall follow Amartya Sen and take Richard Layard and his *Happiness: Lessons From a New Science* as a representative for the happiness approach. This is subjected to criticism by Sen in *The Idea of Justice* [3]. Enthusiasts for the subjective happiness

approach such as Layard make five core assumptions, some of which are indicated by the sub-title of *The Journal of Happiness Studies*, with its reference to the notion of subjective well-being. The first of these is a commitment to monism, or the view that there is only one value which really matters. The second is that this unitary value is happiness. Hence, in their opinion, happiness is all that matters. Given this assumption, there is evidently a close intellectual affinity between the happiness approach to human development and well-being and utilitarianism, more specifically, the classical version of that doctrine, in the writings of Jeremy Bentham.

The third assumption that is made by Layard is that happiness is entirely a subjective affair. Contrary to the view that is associated with ethical eudaimonism, Layard holds that there is for them no such thing as objective happiness. There is no more to happiness than a subjectively experienced 'feeling.' In Layard's words, 'happiness is feeling good and misery is feeling bad' [1]. On this view, if somebody 'feels' happy then they are happy. For there is no more to happiness than having a feeling of a certain kind, or being in a certain psychological state. On this view, as Shakespeare's Hamlet says, 'there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' Consequently, one cannot be mistaken about one's own happiness.

It is true that Layard thinks that mental experiences or of this kind, or psychological states of mind, can be connected to the physiological activity of the human brain, and that this is something which increasingly we are able to objectively measure [1]. Once that is done, we can go on to explain a person's underlying level of happiness, 'the 'quality of his life as he experiences it' [1]. Nevertheless, according to Layard and other advocates of this view, this should not be thought to imply that the concept of happiness is objective in any other sense of the term, especially not the sense according to which individual agents might possibly be mistaken when making a judgement about their own happiness. For those who subscribe to a subjective or subjectivist understanding of the notion of happiness, to talk in that way would involve a contradiction in terms.

Layard's fourth assumption is that there is, therefore, no significant difference between 'happiness' and 'well-being.' These two terms are synonyms. They are simply two different ways of talking about or referring to the same thing. His fifth assumption is that, just like happiness, so also well-being is entirely a subjective affair. This implies that those like Layard who make this assumption should not really talk about 'subjective well-being' at all, and would not do so if their thinking was entirely consistent. This is so because for them, given their understanding of the concept of well-being, the term is a pleonasm. It really only makes sense to speak in that way if one also accepts that there is such a thing as objective well-being as well as subjective well-being. However, this is something which Layard denies.

3. Sen's version of the capabilities approach

Sen is a critic of what I have called the happiness approach to human development and well-being, especially Layard's subjectivist version of it. He rejects most of its assumptions, though not all of them. With one important exception, his version of the capabilities approach is based on a very different set of beliefs. First of all Sen rejects Layard's monism, or the view that there is only one thing which really matters, or only one core value in ethics and politics, either for private individuals or for policy makers. Sen rejects Layard's utilitarianism, 'on the grounds that well-being,' whether understood by Layard or in some other way, 'is not the only thing that is valuable' [4].

There is disagreement over the issue of what Sen's proposed alternative to monism is, specifically whether he is a pluralist who maintains that there are many values, which are of equal importance to one another or, alternatively, a dualist who maintains that there are in fact two core values rather than just one. For present purposes, I shall present Sen as a dualist. His version of the capabilities approach attaches importance to just two core values, not one or more. These two core values are well-being and freedom. Unlike Layard, far from being *the* one and only value in ethics, happiness is not even one of the core values in Sen's version of the capability approach. I shall consider what Sen has to say about the value of happiness in part four.

There is evidential support for a dualist reading of Sen's views. For example, in *On Ethics and Economics*, he states that 'there is an essential and irreducible "duality" in the conception of a person in ethical calculation' [4]. This is so, he continues, because 'we can see the person, in terms of agency [freedom – TB], recognizing and respecting his or her ability to form goals, commitments, values, etc., and we can also see the person in terms of well-being' [4]. Sen makes the same point in his Dewey lectures of 1984. There he observes that 'in these lectures I have tried to explore some of the implications of seeing persons from two different perspectives, viz., well-being and agency, neither of which can subsume the other' [5]. He goes on to say that these 'two basic aspects of persons, viz., well-being and agency' might be associated with the 'dual base' of his capability approach to questions of ethics and politics [5]. His conclusion in *On Ethics and Economics* is that there is 'no possibility of relying on utility-based calculation' in order to catch 'the dual basis of well-being and agency in substantive ethics.' This 'duality between achievement and freedom,' he argues, is simply 'not capturable within the "monist" framework of utility-based calculus' [4]. Sen argues that, because of its dualism, his version of the capabilities approach provides 'a different—and in many ways a richer—perspective on the evaluation of individual well-being and freedom' than is offered by utilitarianism. Consequently, it provides a more 'plausible informational basis for a large part of social evaluation' [6].

This conceptual dualism between the value of freedom and that of well-being runs throughout Sen's work. It is expressed in different ways at different times. Sometimes Sen distinguishes between thinking about individual human beings as either 'agents' or as 'patients.' Elsewhere, when talking about the actions of individual agents, he differentiates between 'processes' or the process side of things, on the one hand, and 'achievements' or 'outcomes' on the other. The same dualism is also implicit in his distinction, which is central to his version of the capabilities approach, between 'capabilities' and 'functionings.' When Sen talks about capabilities he has in mind realistic opportunities for the successful achievement of certain outcomes which are preferred and freely chosen by individual agents. The concept of 'functionings,' on the other hand, has to do with whether or not the intended outcomes, or the associated 'beings and doings,' are in fact successfully achieved.

Sen holds that there is no guarantee that an increase in freedom, understood by reference to the notion of capabilities, will lead to an increase in well-being. This is so for a variety of reasons. For example, this may not be what the agent chooses. Alternatively, the agent may choose to promote her own well-being and yet, for some reason, decide not to act on that choice. Also, Sen suggests at times that the well-being of the agent might actually be reduced for some reason. This might be either intentional or unintentional. In the first case, as with Mohandas Gandhi, this would happen if through an act of commitment the agent freely chose to act in a way which they know will lead to a diminution of their own well-being. Alternatively, they might choose to pursue their own well-being and act accordingly, but unsuccessfully.

An unintended outcome of their action might be that their well-being actually falls, despite their efforts to increase it.

The second assumption which Sen makes follows on immediately from the first. It is that, *pace* Layard and classical utilitarianism, happiness is not the only value which matters. In his contribution to the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume, Sen argues that 'it is one thing to see utility or happiness as important, but it is quite another to insist that nothing else matters' [6]. Here he emphasises the importance of two other values, namely that of freedom and justice. He says that note should 'be taken of considerations of freedom in assessing social arrangements' [6]. He also draws attention to the value of justice, understood by reference, not only to 'the rights' which people enjoy, but also to their 'actual opportunities in society' [6], or what Max Weber would refer to as their 'life chances' [7]. When it comes to social evaluation, Sen argues, 'there are grounds for being concerned about the interpersonal distribution of these freedoms, rights, and opportunities' [6]. In other words, unlike classical utilitarianism, which is entirely quantitative or summative and has no interest at all in the issue of distribution or redistribution, Sen thinks that we should be concerned about the issue of social equality or justice. This involves redistribution of economic resources. At the same time, however, Sen assumes that the promotion of social justice, understood in this way, is significant because it is a necessary precondition for the existence of freedom as he understands the concept.

Sen's view that happiness is not the only important value is clear from the emphasis which he places on the value of freedom. However, it is also clear from the fact that the value which he contrasts with that of freedom is in fact well-being and not happiness. According to Sen, there is a significant difference between 'happiness' and 'well-being' [5, 8, 9]. In *On Ethics and Economics* (1987), Sen refers to 'the insufficient depth of the criterion of happiness or desire-fulfilment in judging a person's well-being' [4]. He also maintains that 'happiness' and the 'fulfilment of desire' with which Layard associates it, 'cannot, on their own or even together – adequately reflect the value of well-being' [4]. In his view, then, utilitarianism, by which he has in mind the classical utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and latterly of Richard Layard, 'provides a defective view of well-being' [4]. The problem with utilitarianism, he says, is that 'the claim of utility to be the only source of value' rests on wrongly 'identifying utility with well-being' [4]. Sen maintains that this view is open to criticism. In his opinion, utility or happiness 'does not adequately represent well-being' [4]. The conceptual distinction between happiness and well-being is central to Sen's ethical and political thought, and to his critique of the subjective happiness approach that is defended by Layard.

A third assumption that is made by Sen is one which he shares with Layard and with classical utilitarianism. This is the assumption that happiness is entirely a subjective affair. In other words, Sen rejects outright the notion of objective happiness, which is one of the core assumptions of ethical eudaimonism from the time of Aristotle to that of John Stuart Mill. So far as he is concerned, happiness in the strict sense of the term is necessarily or inherently subjective. For Sen also, therefore, the expression 'subjective happiness' is a pleonasm. Given his understanding of what the concept of happiness involves, for Sen to characterise happiness as 'subjective' is unnecessary. I consider Sen's capabilities approach from the standpoint of ethical eudaimonism and its notion of objective happiness in part four.

A fourth assumption of Sen's version of the capabilities approach is that well-being is at least in part an objective affair. Sen insists, therefore, that although one cannot be mistaken about one's own happiness, nevertheless one can be mistaken about one's

own well-being. According to one commonly held reading of his views, Sen holds that far from being a pleonasm, as Layard argues, on the contrary the notion of 'subjective well-being' is in fact an oxymoron. If he is read in this way, Sen rejects Layard's view that happiness subjectively understood is a sufficient condition for well-being. At the same time, however, he does not think that it is a necessary condition either. I shall discuss an alternative reading of his views on this subject in part four.

What Sen says about the phenomenon of adaptation is relevant here. This has to do with the case of how extremely deprived individuals adapt to their situation. In his contribution to the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume, as elsewhere, Sen draws attention to the significance of the phenomenon of adaptation for an assessment of the adequacy of utilitarianism as an approach to the understanding of well-being. He repeats his oft cited claim that 'the utilitarian calculus based on, say, happiness can be deeply unfair to those who are persistently deprived, such as the traditional underdogs in stratified societies' [6]. These 'hopelessly deprived people,' he says, 'often tend to adjust their desires and expectations to what little they see as feasible,' thereby 'making deprived lives bearable' [6]. Sen argues there that if we focus entirely on 'the metric of pleasure or desire fulfilment,' then 'the disadvantages of the hopeless underdog may seem much smaller than would emerge from a more objective analysis of the extent of their deprivation and unfreedom' [6]. It is important to note, however, that Sen refrains from arguing that these deprived individuals are not really happy at all, and that they just (mistakenly) think that they are. On the contrary, he accepts that they *are* happy. This is one of Sen's reasons for not attaching too much importance to the value of happiness.

Sen insists that what matters most is not happiness but, rather, well-being. This raises two interesting and related questions. The first is whether Sen considers well-being to be *entirely* an objective affair. The second is whether or not Sen attaches any value at all to subjective happiness. With respect to these two questions, Sen has been interpreted in different ways. According to one reading, he holds that well-being is indeed entirely an objective matter. Consequently, he attaches no importance at all to the value of happiness. According to another, he maintains merely that there is an objective component to well-being. Hence he does attach at least some importance to the value of happiness, subjectively understood. I shall say something about these two alternative readings of Sen's views regarding the value of subjective happiness in part four.

4. Sen on the value of happiness

In this part I consider what Sen has said about the value of happiness over the years. I should emphasise at the outset that I do not think that Sen's views have altered significantly. In particular, he did not change them in response to criticisms he received from the various contributors to the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume. Rather, his response to those criticisms was simply to draw attention to the fact that he had already pre-empted them in his earlier writings. In short, he suggests that his critics should have read what he has to say about the importance of the value of happiness more carefully.

There are two issues here. The first is Sen's understanding of what happiness is and involves. The second is his assessment of the value which should be attached to happiness as he understands the term. So far as the first of these issues is concerned, it is important to note that Sen consistently assumes that happiness is indeed a subjective

matter and not an objective one. He endorses rather than rejects the hedonistic understanding of the notion of happiness that is to be found in the writings of Layard and other contributors to the happiness literature.

Tadashi Hirai, Flavio Comin and Yukio Ikemoto have rightly suggested that Sen's understanding of the concept of happiness is 'hedonic.' That is to say, he endorses the view that happiness is a 'mental state' which is associated with such things 'pleasure and desire' [10]. Sen never argues that there is more to happiness than subjective experiences of that kind. In Sen's theoretical framework, it is not happiness but rather well-being that is considered to be more than a hedonic feeling. It is a distinctive feature of Sen's version of the capabilities approach that he endorses Layard's view that happiness itself is indeed a purely psychological condition, or a state of mind. In agreement with Layard and utilitarianism, Sen has rejected outright the idea, associated with ethical eudaimonism, that there might be such a thing as objective happiness. I shall examine this view in part five.

However, the fact that Sen thinks about the concept of happiness in this subjectivist way is not to say that he approves of hedonism, or that he attaches importance to the pursuit of happiness in this sense. On the contrary, there are times when Sen gives his readers the impression that he strongly disapproves of those, like Layard, who maintain that human existence has solely to do with the pursuit of happiness in that hedonistic sense of the term. On the issue of Sen's assessment of the value of subjective happiness, there are two contrasting readings of his views. I shall consider them in turn.

4.1 Sen attaches no value to subjective happiness

I have said that for Sen there are just two core values, neither of which is happiness. These two values are freedom and well-being. It might therefore be thought that Sen attaches no importance at all to the value of happiness, subjectively understood. That is how some of his critics understand his views. Some of the contributors to the capabilities versus happiness debate have criticised Sen along just these lines. The broad thrust of most of the contributions to this debate is to argue that this is a weakness in Sen's thinking and that his version of the capabilities approach would be improved if he were to attach at least some importance to the value of happiness. These commentators are of the opinion that 'the capabilities approach' and 'the happiness approach' are both partial and one-sided. They suggest that each of these approaches provides valuable insights for those who are concerned with issues in development ethics, which are overlooked by the other. Moreover, each is open to possible criticism from the standpoint of the other. Consequently, they argue, there is scope to provide a theoretical synthesis of them both. For those who think in this way, the core assumptions of the happiness approach and Sen's version of the capabilities approach are compatible with one another and may fruitfully be combined. I shall survey these contributions, before offering a critique of them.

For example Flavio Comim, in an article entitled 'Capabilities and Happiness: Potential Synergies,' which he contributed to a special issue of the *Review of Social Economy* in 2005, argued that there are 'two prominent approaches to assessing Human Well-Being,' namely 'the Capability Approach and the Subjective Well-Being Approach,' and states that on his paper 'an argument is made for exploring the potential synergies between them' [11]. Comim maintains that 'both approaches appear to show limitations that can potentially be overcome by drawing from each other' [11]. Similarly, Luigino Bruni, Flavio Comim, and Maurizio Pugno, in their introduction to

the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume in 2008, also maintain that their aim is that of 'bringing together' these 'two different approaches' to understanding 'human development' or 'well-being' [12]. Here also it is argued that 'there are potential synergies to be explored by looking jointly at them' [12]. In the same volume, Johannes Hirata also argues that 'the two perspectives focus on two different aspects, or dimensions, of a comprehensive conception' of human development. Hence they should be regarded as 'complementary, not rival'. According to Hirata, 'their conceptual relationship is best understood as a division of labour' between them' [13].

Andre Hoorn, Ramzi Mabsout, and Ester-Mirjam Sent also argue along similar lines in their contribution to a symposium on 'Happiness and Capability' in *The Journal of Social Economics* in 2010. They maintain that this symposium 'brings together two perspectives that seek a greater measure of well-being,' namely, 'the happiness approach and the capability approach' [14]. They too claim that 'the connection happiness-capability is extremely stimulating and potentially able of opening up a very promising field of research' [14]. In the same special issue, Murat Kotan also asked 'how might we bring these two approaches,' that is to say the capabilities approach (which he also refers to as 'the freedom approach') and the happiness approach 'into closer contact with one another?' [15]. And he too maintains that 'the aim of this paper is to integrate the concerns of both approaches.' In his view, if the notion of agency is taken 'as a focal point of departure,' then it is fairly 'straightforward to see how the work done under the heading of these two approaches can inform and complement each other in a constructive way' [15]. Kotan's conclusion is that 'a freedom plus happiness approach is better than either alone' [15].

Jose M. Edwards and Sophie Pelle also refer to 'two different, and even opposed, programs: the economics of happiness; and the capability approach' [16], which they associate with the names of Tibor Scitovsky and Amartya Sen respectively. These two approaches, they argue, 'represent two major attempts to renew normative economic analysis' [16]. They differ from one another because they possess two 'different concepts of well-being,' namely, 'the "joy" of satisfied consumers for Scitovsky; and the "capabilities" of deprived individuals for Sen' [16]. More recently, Maurizio Pugno has also argued that 'in the study of human welfare and progress, two prominent approaches stand out,' which at first sight 'appear to have opposite perspectives and even opposite weaknesses' [17]. The first of these is 'the capability approach' which was 'founded by A. Sen.' According to Pugno, this approach 'focuses on the objective factors that contribute to human welfare.' The second approach is the 'happiness approach,' which 'focuses on subjective well-being.' Pugno states that his paper 'attempts to go beyond the critical comparison' that has been offered of the two approaches so far, by 'integrating' them [17], in order to 'avoid the just mentioned and other weaknesses' [17]. Pugno states that, in so doing, it attempts to link the objective with the subjective evaluations of individual welfare' [17].

Finally, Martin Binder, also, has maintained that 'two of the most prominent measures of well-being come from subjective well-being research and the capability approach respectively [18]. He too suggests that 'both approaches have significant weaknesses when considered on their own' [18]. And he too asks 'to what extent' can these two approaches 'profit from each other? Is there a way to enrich one with the insights of the other?' [18]. Like the other contributors to the debate, Binder sets himself the task of considering 'to what extent a fusion between both approaches can overcome the weaknesses' of each of them considered separately [18]. In the conclusion to his paper Binder maintains that while both approaches seem *prima facie* disjunct' (sic), and appear to be 'dealing with substantively different ideas of welfare,'

nevertheless he has 'made a case that a combination of both approaches allows to avoid some of the drawbacks associated with them in isolation' [18].

It is clear from the above survey of the capabilities versus happiness debate that the idea of combining the happiness approach and the capabilities approach is well-established in the literature. However, if these two approaches are to be combined in the way proposed, it is necessary for these commentators to assume that the capability approach, as Sen understands it, attaches no importance at all to the value of happiness or subjective well-being. In order for this theoretical synthesis to be possible, it is necessary to present the capabilities approach in a certain way. According to this understanding of its core assumptions, the capabilities approach is partial and one-sided. Adherents of this approach such as Amartya Sen must be regarded as attaching no significance at all to the value of happiness, or to subjective well-being. Against that view, however, it is arguable that Sen's version of the capability approach is not guilty of doing this. To attribute such a position to Sen, as the commentators cited above do, involves a misrepresentation of his views regarding the value of happiness.

4.2 Sen does value subjective happiness

In *On Ethics and Economics* (1987), Sen claimed that 'while happiness and the fulfilment of desire may well be valuable for the person's well-being,' they do not 'adequately reflect the value of well-being' [4]. It is, he argues, 'not the only achievement that matters to one's well-being' [4]. Nevertheless, he does acknowledge there that 'being happy' is indeed 'a momentous achievement.' In *Inequality Re-Examined* (1992), Sen connected this assessment of the value of happiness to his distinction between capabilities and functionings. In this text he argues that although happiness can 'scarcely be the only valuable functioning,' and 'cannot really be taken to be all there is to leading a life,' nevertheless 'being happy may count as an important functioning,' albeit one of many [19].

In his contribution to the capabilities versus happiness debate, in the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume (2008), Sen again emphasises that he does consider happiness, understood as a subjective mental state, to be a significant value. He states explicitly there that happiness 'is extremely important,' since 'being happy is a momentous achievement in itself.' However, he also emphasises that 'happiness cannot be the only thing that we have reason to value, nor the only metric for measuring other things that we value.' Again therefore, despite the limitations of an exclusive focus upon it, Sen acknowledges that subjectively experienced happiness is indeed 'an important human functioning.' The 'capability to be happy,' he argues, is 'a major aspect of the freedom that we have good reason to treasure.' Hence, 'the perspective of happiness illuminates one critically important element of human living.' Nevertheless, Sen also claims in this chapter that 'the metric of happiness' is not 'a particularly good guide' for 'our valuations in general.' [6].

Similarly, in *The Idea of Justice*, which was published in 2009, the year after the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume, in a critique of the views of Richard Layard, Sen argues that the central issue is not the significance of happiness, but the alleged insignificance of everything else' [20]. For 'happiness is not the only thing we seek, or have reason to seek' [20]. Sen strongly objects to Layard's 'claim that nothing else ultimately matters' apart from happiness [20]. Against this view, Sen once more maintained that 'happiness, important as it is, can hardly be the only thing that we have reason to value, nor the only metric for measuring the things that we value' [20]. Once again, therefore, he acknowledged that subjectively conceived happiness

is indeed something that is rightly valued, even if it is not the only thing that is of value. Here, as earlier in *Inequality Re-Examined*, Sen again connects this idea to the distinction which he makes between capabilities and functionings. He argues there that 'the capability to be happy' is a component part, indeed a 'major aspect,' of 'the freedom that we have good reason to value' [20]. He emphasises the significance of the work done by economists in the literature on the economics of happiness and maintains that 'there is little reason to doubt the importance of happiness in human life' [20].

For present purposes what is significant about the remarks cited above is Sen's acknowledgement that subjective happiness is indeed an important value for human beings. On this reading of his views, Sen does attach at least some importance to happiness, understood in the way in which Layard understands it, as a psychological or mental state. In his opinion, being happy in that sense, is a component part of well-being, in the fullest sense of the term, which necessarily takes account the mental as well as the physical aspects of persons and their well-being. For individual persons evidently do possess minds as well as bodies, and due consideration needs to be given to their mental as well as to their physical health. Sen argues that, for this very reason, subjective happiness is a necessary condition for well-being, even if it cannot be said to be a sufficient one (because of the adaptation issue).

In short, Sen's considered position is that well-being, as he understands it, necessarily possesses an objective component, whereas happiness does not. This view is compatible with the belief that well-being also possesses a subjective component, which should not be overlooked, or its significance dismissed. From this standpoint, Sen's objection to Richard Layard's subjective happiness approach is that it identifies happiness and well-being, and thereby collapses these two things into one another. According to Sen, Layard thinks that being happy is not only a necessary condition for the presence of well-being, it is also a sufficient condition. It is that view, and that view only, which Sen rejects.

If his ideas are understood in this way, Sen holds that the value of happiness, subjectively understood, should not be dismissed out of hand as morally irrelevant. He does not claim that self-reported happiness is of no value at all. Rather, he argues that although it is indeed of some value, ethically speaking, nevertheless it is not by any means the most important value, as Layard and utilitarian thinkers mistakenly claim. Sen's conclusion in his contribution to the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume is that although 'happiness is not all that matters,' nevertheless 'it does matter (and that is important)' [6]. Even so, it is I think significant that Sen does not include it in his list of core values. There are only two of these, namely freedom and well-being. Sen consistently assumes that both of these are far more important than happiness. We have seen that Sen subordinates the value of justice to that of freedom. In much the same way, without dismissing it altogether, he subordinates the value of happiness to that of well-being.

When engaging with the views of Richard Layard in *The Idea of Justice* Sen begins by asking 'how adequate is the perspective of happiness in judging a person's well-being'? He observes that when answering this question it is possible to go wrong in two very different ways. For In the first place, we could make the mistake of 'overestimating its importance in judging the well-being of people.' In that case, we would be 'blind to the limitations of making happiness the main – or only – basis of assessment' of social welfare' [20]. This is of course his main objection to Layard's position. However, in the second place, Sen argues that 'we could err' for a different reason, by 'not being fair to the importance of happiness' [20]. It is ironic that, despite his

explicit statement to the contrary, this second criticism has been brought again Sen himself by a number of contributors to the capabilities versus happiness debate.

L. W. Sumner, in his *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics*, asks the question, 'is Sen's account' of well-being 'subjective or objective?' Sumner's reply is that, 'at first glance, the answer seems obvious,' given that Sen 'rejects utility accounts of well-being because they are subjective' [21]. It certainly appears, therefore, that Sen wishes to develop an approach to the understanding of well-being that is in some sense objective, perhaps even entirely so. However, Sumner argues, a more accurate account of Sen's views would be to say that 'he is aiming at a more moderate and defensible version of an objective theory,' that is to say, one which includes within itself an a significant subjective component [21].

Sumner refers to 'hybrid' theories in this connection [21]. Advocates of a hybrid theory, as he understands the term, maintain that 'something can contribute to a subject's well-being' (directly or intrinsically) only if (1) the subject finds it satisfying or fulfilling, or endorses it as an ingredient in her life, and (2) it is independently valuable' [21]. He suggests that hybrid theories in this sense have emerged 'in response to' Amartya Sen's discussion of the adaption problem and his criticisms of extreme subjectivism. In Sumner's words, 'some philosophers' who have engaged critically with Sen's views 'have embraced a kind of hybrid theory, which combines subjective and objective components' [21]. Sumner does not appreciate that such a view might be attributed to Sen himself. He wrongly assumes that Sen subscribes to an entirely objectivist understanding of the notion of well-being.

Des Gasper and Rebecca Gutwald have also stated that Sen's version of the capabilities approach is a 'hybrid' theory [22, 23]. They suggest that Sen and his ideas do not represent the capabilities approach in its pure form. This idea is problematic, given that Sen is usually thought to have initiated the capabilities approach. Indeed, his version of it might be said to be a paradigm example of it. It could not therefore be plausibly argued that Sen's version goes beyond the capabilities approach in its pure form, by combining its central insights with those of the happiness approach. For the belief that subjective happiness is an important functioning, is already a core component of the capabilities approach as he understands it. Sen's version of the capabilities approach, understood in just this way, should itself be regarded as the pure form of that approach.

Johannes Hirata, in his contribution to the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume, argues that if I focus attention on the objective aspect of well-being, as Sen does, 'this is not to say that I do not also care about feeling happy and about pleasure in a purely psychological sense.' What 'it does mean, he says,' is simply that 'this is not the overriding concern.' It is to claim that both subjective and objective considerations are 'constitutive of a good life.' For although it is true that 'a life full of pleasure but without any self-transcendent reasons for being happy can hardly be called a good life,' it is also true that 'a life full of reasons for being happy but without any subjective experience of happiness' is 'certainly not a good life either' [13]. These remarks express very well Amartya Sen's view of the relationship which exists between happiness and well-being. Hirata's reference to the notion of 'the good life,' or to the quality of life, has implications for the claim that Sen's is a dualist thinker. However, a consideration of that issue will have to be left for another occasion.

In conclusion, if the role which the concept of subjective happiness has to play in Sen's thought is properly understood, it becomes clear that Sen's version of the capabilities approach is not at all one-sided, as is suggested by some of the contributors to the capabilities versus happiness debate. Indeed, it is the understanding of the

capabilities approach that is offered by Sen's critics, rather than that of Sen himself, which is subject to this particular objection. Consequently, there is no need for a theoretical synthesis of the capabilities approach and the happiness approach along the lines they propose. Sen has already integrated the value of happiness into his own theoretical system and he has given this value what he considers to be its due. It is just not one of his two core values. Sen evidently thinks that there are things which matter more than subjective happiness. However, that is not the same as holding that happiness is of no ethical value at all.

5. Sen, Aristotle, Eudaimonism and objective happiness

Sen's name is usually mentioned together with that of Martha Nussbaum, who is generally considered to be a Neo-Aristotelian thinker. Sen himself refers to the connection which exists between the philosophy of Aristotle and his own version of the capabilities approach on several occasions. It is true that he does not make a great deal out of this. Rather, he leaves the development of this side of things to Martha Nussbaum. Nevertheless, he does at times maintain that the ultimate origins of his own approach can be found in the writings of Aristotle [4, 6, 19, 24–26].

For example, in *On Ethics and Economics*, Sen states that 'the approach of functionings and capabilities developed in these works can be seen as having something in common with Aristotle's analysis of functions (see *Politics*, Book III)' [4]. Similarly, in his contribution to the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume, he says that 'one route that some of us have tried to explore relates to Aristotle's pointer, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, to the achievement of valuable functionings and to the ability to generate and enjoy such functionings' [6]. He also refers there to the 'ability to achieve combinations of functionings, which is often called "capability".' However, going further than Aristotle, Sen also claims that this 'is really an expression of freedom, and can be interpreted as the freedom to attain different kinds of alternative lives (between which a person can choose)' [6]. Similarly, in *Development as Freedom*, he argues that 'there have indeed been broader voices, including that of Aristotle, whose ideas are of course among the sources on which the present analysis draws' [24]. As Robert Sugden has pointed out, Sen 'repeatedly refers to the Aristotelian concept of "human flourishing" as the philosophical starting point for his own approach' [27].

This association of Sen and his ideas with the philosophy of Aristotle is significant because, as is well known, Aristotle's ethical and political thought attaches fundamental importance to the notion of 'eudaimonia,' a Greek term which has often been translated by the English word 'happiness.' Given this, one might expect Sen to follow Aristotle and also attach importance to the value of happiness, albeit objectively rather than subjectively understood. It is not too surprising, therefore, to find that a number of commentators have interpreted Sen views on happiness along these lines. They have drawn attention to the similarities which exist between Sen's version of the capabilities approach and Aristotle's ethical eudaimonism. For example, Luigino Bruni has argued that, despite Sen's criticisms of the hedonic version of the happiness approach, the capabilities approach, as he understands it, 'is in fact close to the Aristotelian' notion of eudaimonia [28].

Benedetta Giovanola also explicitly associates Sen with ethical eudaimonism, and therefore with the notion of objective happiness [29]. According to Giovanola, Sen's version of the capabilities approach presents a 'critique of happiness as subjective well-being' and is to be associated with 'the idea of "flourishing" which ultimately

refers to the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia' [29]. Giovanola points out that many economists 'understand happiness mainly as subjective well-being,' and 'often related to other notions like pleasure or desire fulfilment, or, more broadly, utility.' She claims that Sen criticises this understanding of what happiness involves, and argues that 'one of Sen's critiques of the notion of happiness addresses precisely this problem' [29].

According to Giovanola, Sen maintains that in the happiness literature the notion of happiness 'is interpreted too subjectively' [29]. Giovanola notes that Sen is a critic of utilitarianism, at least in its classical Benthamite form, for a number of reasons. He rejects 'the interpretation of happiness in utilitarian terms, i.e., as welfare, satisfaction, and maximization of utility function.' However, she argues, his criticisms of utilitarianism 'seems aimed more' at its assumed 'equivalence between welfare, happiness and utility,' than 'at the notion of happiness itself' [29].

The point of Giovanola's claiming that Sen rejects one way of thinking about happiness, but not the other, is to suggest that, like Aristotle and J. S. Mill, Sen is an ethical eudaimonist who endorses the notion of objective happiness. According to Giovanola, this can 'be proven by the fact that Sen does speak about happiness, but very differently than utilitarian thinkers.' Indeed, she maintains, 'he wants to restore happiness to its traditionally essential and broader meaning, linked to the Aristotelian notion of eudaimonia, which is commonly translated as happiness, but which instead is closer to "flourishing"' [29, 30].

A similar view is also taken by Carl-Henric Grenholm. According to him, 'in Aristotelian philosophy happiness is taken to be much more than pleasure. It is related to flourishing and integral human fulfilment, which means the realization of the potentials we have as humans' [31]. Grenholm maintains that the 'neo-Aristotelian position' that is set out by both Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum shares with Aristotle's eudaimonism the view that 'happiness may be understood in terms of human self-actualization.' It is for this reason, Grenholm argues, that they 'reject the utilitarian theory' that well-being or 'welfare' has to do only with pleasure or preference satisfaction' [31]. Grenholm claims that 'one argument in favour of the capabilities approach,' as he thinks Sen understands it, 'is that it entails a reasonable understanding of what happiness means' [31]. By this Grenholm has in mind the idea that, unlike Richard Layard, Sen subscribes to an objective or objectivist understanding of the concept of happiness.

Finally, Tadashi Hirai, Flavio Comin and Yukio Ikemoto have also argued that it is possible to find in Sen's writings an alternative, though 'complementary' view, according to which 'happiness is not simply a hedonic feeling,' but rather a 'manifestation of the things that' objectively speaking 'we have reason to value'. It is for this reason, they argue, that for Sen 'happiness,' objectively understood, 'can provide an informational space that can be part of an overall assessment of our quality of life' [10].

This reading of Sen's views on happiness, with its attribution to him of the notion of objective happiness, as we find it in the writings of Aristotle and other eudaimonist thinkers, seems to me to be not well founded. In fact, as we have seen, Sen endorses Richard Layard's view that happiness is a matter of subjective well-being. This is his main reason for insisting that there is much more to the quality of life than happiness. This reading of Sen's views overlooks the significance which Sen attaches to the distinction between happiness and well-being. For Sen it is not so much the notion of happiness that is to be associated with that of human self-actualization or flourishing, but rather that of well-being. For Sen happiness just is an hedonic feeling and nothing more. It is well-being that Sen thinks has an objective component, not happiness. This is not to say, however, that Sen regards well-being as an entirely objective affair.

We saw earlier that Sen does acknowledge the importance of subjectively perceived happiness as an essential component of well-being.

Sen appreciates that the capabilities approach as he understands it has a close connection to the Aristotelian notion of the good life, or human flourishing. However, he is reluctant to characterise such a life as a happy life, or to associate it too closely with the value of happiness. He prefers, rather, to talk about the concept of well-being. There is a similarity between Aristotle's ethical eudaimonism and Sen's version of the capabilities approach. However, this has nothing to do with their respective understandings of the notion of happiness. Rather, it has again to do with their conceptualisation of the notion of well-being. As we have seen, Amartya Sen endorses the hedonic or subjectivist way of thinking about happiness that is dominant within the happiness literature today. He is very close to Aristotle on other issues, especially his understanding of the notion of well-being, and the related but not identical notion of the quality of life, but not so far as his understanding of the concept of happiness itself is concerned.

Grenholm may well be correct when he states that there are 'good philosophical' reasons 'to maintain' that happiness is 'not limited to pleasure and feeling good.' Rather, as in the case of 'an Aristotelian perspective on happiness,' which might be 'expressed in terms of functionings and capabilities,' happiness can and should 'be understood in terms of human fulfilment and human flourishing' [31]. Such a doctrine is often rightly associated with Aristotle. However, it would be wrong to attribute this Aristotelian notion of happiness to Amartya Sen. Sen explicitly dissociates himself from any such understanding of his own views. In his opinion it is not happiness, but rather well-being, or possibly the quality of life, which is to be understood in this way. Sen does not consider himself to be an ethical eudaimonist, or a follower of Aristotle in this particular sense, despite the affinities which exist between his ideas and those of Aristotle with respect to other issues. A fuller treatment of this subject would require a consideration of Sen's understanding of the notion of the quality of life, and how this relates to the idea of well-being. I set discussion of this issue aside for the present.

Sen criticises the views of ethical eudaimonists, from Aristotle to John Stuart Mill, whose understanding of what real or true happiness involves is either entirely objectivist, or has a significant objective component. For example, in *The Standard of Living*, he argues that 'it is, of course, possible to pack more into the notion of happiness than common usage will allow, and to see some objective achievements as part of being "really happy"' [32]. He also acknowledges there that 'the Greek concept of *eudaimonia* may suggest similarly broad interpretations of happiness' [32]. Nevertheless, he insists, 'in the present context there is not much point in going in that direction, since other notions of value and valuation,' for example well-being and freedom, 'can be entertained in their own right without their having to be inducted into serious consideration through riding on the back of pleasure or happiness' [32].

Perhaps with John Stuart Mill in mind, Sen also maintains in *The Standard of Living* that if one is a monist thinker, for example a 'self-declared utilitarian who has signed away his freedom to use other concepts,' and who is in consequence 'stuck with having to make do with the notion of happiness,' and who must 'base all evaluation on happiness alone,' then ethical eudaimonism, with its notion of objective happiness, might perhaps, in such circumstances, 'form a sensible exercise' [32]. However, Sen himself rejects any such theoretical monism and refuses to limit his own thinking in that way. Sen has a great deal of sympathy for Mill and his ideas generally, as well as

for those of Aristotle, but he does not endorse their objectivist understanding of the notion of happiness.

It is clear from the above that Sen thinks that it is misleading, to translate Aristotle's Greek term 'eudaimonia' into English as 'happiness.' He is of the opinion that what Aristotle has in mind when he talks about eudaimonia is not the same thing as is implied by the use of the word 'happiness' today. These are two very different concepts. Nor is Sen alone in this. For example, Luigino Bruni, in his contribution to the *Capabilities and Happiness* volume, also suggests that 'the Aristotelian meaning of eudaimonia is semantically impoverished when translated into the English word happiness,' because the Greek expression means 'the highest end that a human person can realize' [28], whereas the word 'happiness' does not mean this at all. Bruni argues that 'neo-Aristotelian philosophers in the Anglo-Saxon world' are right to prefer 'to translate eudaimonia with "human flourishing" rather than happiness,' because 'in common language today' the word 'happiness' is commonly thought to refer to 'momentary euphoria, 'or to the presence of 'pleasurable sensation' [28].

Bruni agrees with Amartya Sen that a subjectivist understanding of the notion of happiness is necessarily built in to the use of the word 'happiness,' which cannot therefore, in his opinion, any other meaning [28]. Nevertheless, a number of commentators have taken issue with this view. In their opinion, the notion of objective happiness, which they attribute to Aristotle, makes perfectly good sense, even today. Bruni acknowledges that at least 'some scholars' continue to 'maintain that "happiness," if qualified, renders the original meaning of *eudaimonia* more appropriately' than any other alternative expression [28]. The view, held by Bruni and others [33], that Aristotle's 'eudaimonia' should not be translated into English as 'happiness' has been challenged, notably by Richard Kraut, in his 'Two Concepts of Happiness [34], by Julia Annas, in *The Morality of Happiness* [35], and by Merrill Ring, in 'Aristotle and the Concept of Happiness' [36].

Kraut acknowledges that although 'it is sometimes correct to call a person happy merely because he feels that way about his life,' Aristotle 'never uses *eudaimonia* in this way,' and in this respect 'his term differs markedly from our (sic) own' [34]. However, Kraut's point here is not so much that it is wrong to translate the Greek word 'eudaimonia' into English as 'happiness.' Rather it is that, given that for Aristotle eudaimonia and happiness are the same thing, it follows that the Greek term can legitimately be translated in that way, provided that care is taken to avoid any misunderstanding of its meaning.

When discussing the disagreement between objectivists and subjectivists regarding the nature of happiness, Kraut asks whether this disagreement is 'merely verbal?' Does the objectivist simply differ from the subjectivist because she assigns 'a different meaning to the word "happiness?"' Should we say that she would make her point 'more clearly and effectively' by using 'a different word instead of "happiness?"; for example the word 'flourishing,' so that it might be said that 'one can be happy,' subjectively speaking, and yet 'not flourish,' and vice versa. Given his subjectivist understanding of what happiness involves, it seems clear that Amartya Sen would have some sympathy with that view. However, Kraut maintains that 'the objectivist has good reason to reject this proposal' [34]. For words do matter. In his opinion, 'happiness is what people want for themselves.' Moreover, people 'are unlikely to change' their lives drastically 'for their own sake unless they believe that they are not presently leading happy lives.' Consequently, 'if we take the word "happiness" away from the objectivist,' then 'we take away a strategic tool, which she rightly insists on

using' when engaging in debate with subjectivists [34]. Kraut insists, then, that 'the objectivist is not simply adopting an arbitrary and misleading way of talking' [34]. On the contrary, she 'thinks that the way we talk about happiness' today, which is the way in which Amartya Sen also talks about it, 'deceives people into leading what is, from their own point of view, the wrong kind of life' [34]. In his opinion, therefore, there is a substantive issue involved here and not merely a verbal one. Kraut argues that 'we would be missing' her point 'if we were to look upon' her 'way of judging people happy to be nothing but a misuse of the word' [34].

Julia Annas has also defended this position, in her *The Morality of Happiness*. There Annas endorses Kraut's views regarding happiness in general, as well as his reading of Aristotle's opinions on the subject. As she puts it, Kraut 'claims, convincingly, that we (sic) also have an "objective" notion of happiness.' That is to say, 'when we hope that somebody will be happy, we are not hoping that they will feel happy even if they are grossly mistaken, but rather hoping that they will have good reason to feel happy' [35]. Annas insists that it is entirely appropriate to translate the Greek word 'eudaimonia' into English as 'happiness.' This is so because for Aristotle 'eudaimonia is happiness [my emphasis]' [35]. In her opinion, 'ancient theories, like that of Aristotle, 'are theories about happiness' itself. They are not about something else other than happiness. This is the case even though they contain 'a reflective account' of what happiness, properly understood, involves, one which requires an understanding that true happiness 'requires having the virtues,' and also 'giving proper weight to the interests of others' [35].

Annas acknowledges that the word 'happiness,' as it is often used today, including by Amartya Sen, 'covers some areas that are not covered by eudaimonia' [35]. However, in her opinion, this is not a sufficient reason to translate the Greek word in some other way, for example by the term 'flourishing.' Rather, all that is necessary, is that 'we remember that,' for Aristotle and indeed for ourselves, happiness properly understood has to do, no so much with a momentary sensation of pleasure, but rather with 'a whole life,' or with an individual agent 'in respect of her whole life,' and that 'it implies that she has a positive attitude to her whole life' [35]. Unlike Amartya Sen, Richard Kraut and Julia Annas both endorse the eudaimonistic notion of objective happiness. In their view, even if happiness properly so-called is not entirely an objective matter, nevertheless it does at least possess an objective component. This is something which Sen denies.

6. Conclusion

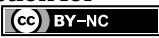
This chapter has examined Amartya Sen's version of the capabilities approach from the standpoint of the concept of happiness. Sen's views on this subject have sometimes been misunderstood. Contrary to the view of some commentators. Sen does not follow Aristotle by embracing ethical eudaimonism, with its objectivist understanding of what true happiness involves. On the contrary, Sen agrees with those who maintain that happiness is nothing more than a subjective, psychological state. I have argued that despite its evident strengths in other areas, and because of its endorsement of the notion of subjective happiness, Sen's capabilities approach is open to criticism from an Aristotelian point of view. Sen does not take seriously enough the possibility that there may be such a thing as objective happiness. His unwillingness to accept that the concept of happiness might be understood in this eudaimonistic way is a weakness in his thinking.

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Identifying the Gaps between Biopsychosocial Research and Human Behavior: Implications for Happiness and Well-Being

Charlotte Shelton and Sarah Hon

Abstract

This chapter reviews recent research in psychology, neuroscience, and quantum physics relating to perception, paradox, synchronicity, brain chemicals, brain mapping, and the so-called social brain, discussing the gaps between scientific findings and the integration of these findings into human behavior. Specific implications of the identified gaps relating to happiness and well-being are identified and seven quantum skills are introduced. These quantum skills are designed to pragmatize recent research; thus, promoting the integration of new scientific knowledge into human behavior. The authors propose future research that measures the efficacy of these skills for creating sustained happiness and well-being at the individual level, as well as increased global flourishing.

Keywords: happiness, paradox, positive psychology, perception, quantum skills, social brain, synchronicity, well-being

1. Introduction

The desire for happiness appears to be universal, though its attainment remains elusive. Significant differences in the definition of happiness across cultures, coupled with widely varying theories regarding how it can be achieved, add measurement complexity. For example, Western cultures typically associate happiness with positive affect; thus, Western happiness research has historically defined happiness as the presence of positive emotions [1]. The Western happiness literature primarily uses measures of subjective well-being (SWB) as a proxy for happiness [2, 3]; and Western psychological theories of happiness typically focus on individualistic values such as autonomy, self-esteem, and mastery [4]. Even though the Western happiness literature differs considerably as to the factors that contribute to happiness, there is general agreement that the result of happiness is an emotional sense of subjective well-being (SWB).

On the other hand, Eastern cultures associate happiness with contentment or peace of mind [5, 6]. Happiness is not associated with positive affect; and, contrary to Western cultures, Eastern cultures do not view happiness as incompatible with suffering [7]. Thus, it is not surprising that while Western theories associate happiness with

high arousal positive states (e.g., excitement), Eastern happiness theories typically define happiness using terms associated with low arousal states (e.g., calmness) [8]. Eastern beliefs regarding happiness have their roots in ancient religions (e.g., Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sufism); yet they are reflected in contemporary Eastern secular cultural values such as cooperation and harmony [1].

In addition to cultural differences, the happiness literature has attempted to differentiate between hedonic happiness/well-being (i.e., positive affect) and eudaimonic happiness/well-being (i.e., self-actualization) [2, 9]. Though many studies have attempted to differentiate these two concepts, there has not been a consistent definition of the two terms; thus, measurement issues add complexity and confusion to the findings. Additionally, there appears to be an overlap between the two constructs as measures of hedonic and eudaimonic happiness strongly correlate [10]. Kashdan et al. [3] comment: “until issues of definition, methodology, and relatedness are better understood, research programs attending to differences in these types of well-being will be relatively weak and difficult to interpret meaningfully” (p. 227).

As most Western research uses happiness and well-being as interchangeable, or at least inter-related concepts [11], this chapter will not differentiate between them. Though there may be differences between happiness (feeling good) and well-being (feeling fulfilled) this chapter will not make such a distinction. Rather the authors will follow the precedent of other research and use the term well-being as an overarching construct that encompasses happiness [12]. However, contrary to other Western research that focuses on techniques for increasing well-being by increasing positive affect, this chapter presents a comprehensive set of life skills grounded in concepts that are congruent with both Western and Eastern perspectives about happiness, as well as both eudemonic and hedonic constructs. These skills are derived from concepts in quantum physics and recent discoveries in neuroscience, as well as research in the field of positive psychology. They enable users to apply a comprehensive set of research findings from three disparate disciplines in order to close the gap between what is known scientifically and the beliefs and behaviors of the general population. It is hypothesized that closing this gap will lead to higher levels of happiness and well-being.

2. Positive psychology research

During the last decade of the twentieth century, the field of psychology began to shift from a focus on pathology to a focus on possibility [13]. While numerous factors contributed to this shift, a growing body of research on the subjectivity of human perception undoubtedly played a significant role [14, 15]. The 1990s were characterized by breakthrough research into the perceptual process, enabled by positron emission tomography (PET) and later functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Research into the role of intention and attention in the perceptual process led to an increasing awareness that intention is the psychological process by which humans create reality [16]. Intention shifts attention; thus, providing access to new perceptual choices that otherwise would have been missed.

Positive psychology focuses on identifying factors that enable people to live a good life—a life of happiness. Obviously, intention is a key factor. Intention causes people to focus their attention on certain goals, while ignoring a plethora of other perceptual possibilities, thus aligning perceptions with desires. This led to the first wave of positive psychology interventions including affirmations, visual imagery, and gratitude

journals, to name only a few. More recently a growing body of researchers has labeled positive psychology as hedonic due to its focus on individual mastery and positive affect as the critical ingredients for achieving happiness [17]. In other words, the early research in positive psychology framed happiness as the absence of negative emotions and focused more on individual agency than on human connectivity.

Scholarly pushback regarding this Western bias in happiness research has led to an emergent wave of scholarship referred to by a variety of labels: existential positive psychology [18], the second wave of positive psychology [19, 20], and positive psychology 2.0 [21]. At the heart of positive psychology 2.0 (PP2.0) is the recognition that optimal well-being comes from the dynamic interplay between positive and negative experiences and emotions [21]. In other words, PP2.0 recognizes the importance of dialectical (paradoxical) thinking which is based on the philosophical idea that everything is composed of opposites. For example, it is possible to feel both happy and sad, and to love and hate simultaneously. Nothing is ever all good or all bad.

Numerous scholars have expressed concern that by focusing only on the positive, the first wave of positive psychology failed to adequately acknowledge that people live in a multi-faceted reality—not a binary world. The second wave of positive psychology recognizes well-being requires “appreciating and even embracing the complex and ambivalent nature of life” ([11], p. 1757). In certain situations, positive qualities (e.g., optimism) can even be detrimental to well-being, while frequently labeled negative emotions (e.g., anxiety) are sometimes useful [11]. Cognitive flexibility is a prerequisite to seeing both the positive and negative aspects embedded in each of life’s challenges. Seeing life from multiple perspectives requires dialectical thinking.

The theoretical evolution of positive psychology not only integrates hedonic and eudaimonic definitions of well-being, but PP2.0 is also a step toward integrating Eastern and Western perspectives on happiness. As noted above, there is increasing recognition that hardship and negative emotions may be unavoidable aspects of a good life. Ho and Ho [22] comment that “true happiness includes the wisdom to embrace unhappiness as a part of life” noting that happiness may “come naturally when one is no longer obsessed with pursuing it” (p. 64).

Yet, even as the field of positive psychology is broadening its definition of happiness and well-being, a large population of Western “happiness seekers” [23] continue to focus on simply learning techniques (e.g., gratitude journals, affirmations, and vision boards) rather than expanding their worldview to incorporate the scientific discoveries of the twenty-first century and their behavior to align with these discoveries. There are tens of thousands of instantly downloadable self-help applications claiming happiness to be only a few clicks (or techniques) away [23], yet their long-term efficacy is primarily untested. This chapter is not meant to discount the value of digital self-help apps, rather it is intended to provide a complementary and much more comprehensive set of skills that integrate scientific findings from three disparate disciplines into a new way of conceptualizing, creating, and sustaining human happiness and a subjective sense of well-being.

3. Neuroscience research

During the past two decades, neuroscience research has made remarkable discoveries about the human brain. Many of these discoveries are a result of novel ways of imaging the brain such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This noninvasive procedure creates computerized images that allow researchers to digitally track individual

thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to map the corresponding biological pathways. Some of the pathways and circuitry identified relate to the experience of well-being. An example is the so-called social brain [24]. The social brain circuitry suggests that humans are hardwired to connect with others and that human connection is a prerequisite for optimal thriving [25]. A sense of connection reduces anxiety and depression [26]; conversely, loneliness increases mental, physical, and emotional distress [27].

Similarly, new knowledge regarding neurotransmitters such as oxytocin and dopamine provides new insights into the biochemistry of well-being. Dopamine, sometimes referred to as the pleasure chemical [28], has mental health implications far beyond the treatment of addictions [29] and ADHD [30]. Recent research indicates dopamine levels can be increased via lifestyle changes such as a high protein diet [31], physical exercise [32], adequate sleep [33], listening to music [34], sunlight exposure [35], and yoga [36], thus increasing a sense of well-being. Meditation has an especially strong correlation with increased dopamine levels. One study identified a 65% increase in dopamine production after 1 hour of meditating, compared to a control group that was resting quietly [37].

Recent research has also expanded our understanding of the role that oxytocin plays in well-being. This brain chemical, often referred to as the bonding hormone, is not only released during the birthing process to promote bonding between female mammals and their offspring, it can also be released by experiences ranging from simple human touch to eye contact with a pet [38]. Empathy and trust are both increased by oxytocin [39, 40]. Oxytocin produces antidepressant-like effects in animals [41] and low levels of oxytocin are believed to be a factor in human depression [42]. Current research is also investigating the role that serotonin plays in mood disorders and mental health issues [43].

One of the most remarkable discoveries is the identification of the brain's neuroplasticity, an umbrella term that refers to the brain's ability to modify, change and adapt both structure and function throughout life and in response to experience [44]. Using fMRI researchers have discovered that individuals can actually change neural connections, thus re-wiring their brains [45]. Furthermore, the development of new neural networks appears to be facilitated via positive interactions with others. Studies at Oxford University found that as adult monkeys were encouraged to interact in positive ways with other monkeys, the brain pathways linked to the social brains of these monkeys increased both in size and connectivity [46]. At the human level, research suggests that the human brain has the ability to synchronize with other brains creating increased empathy and cooperation which leads to a greater sense of well-being [47]. Functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) has shown that brain synchrony increases when individuals mirror the body movements of others; while MRI studies have demonstrated the power of eye contact to stimulate the mirror neurons in the limbic system, thus deepening a sense of connection to others and increasing awareness of others' intentions [48].

Even though neuroscience research has made remarkable progress in understanding brain functioning, researchers have not yet fully identified the role that the brain plays in human consciousness. Chalmers [49] refers to this as the "hard problem" in neuroscience and purports that consciousness can never be explained solely via classical analysis due to the qualitative/subjective properties (i.e., qualia) of lived experience. Though other researchers [50] have a very different perspective and continue to strive to analyze the neural correlates of consciousness, there is a growing body of research suggesting that consciousness is a function of quantum processes in the brain [51]. These scholars believe brain/mind/consciousness processes are so complex that

they cannot be reduced to the sum of their elementary ingredients [52]; furthermore, if consciousness is a function of quantum processes at the subatomic level of the brain, these processes will never be observable via classical brain mapping.

4. Quantum physics research

We are living in an era that could be called The Quantum Age [53]. The technological advancements of the past century have been made possible by a theory of physics called quantum mechanics. Nuclear power, computers, PET scans, and artificial intelligence represent only a few of the remarkable outcomes of this so-called “new physics.” Quantum mechanics, or quantum physics as it is commonly called, is the science of the microscopic realm. Classical, or Newtonian physics, is the science of the observable world of three-dimensional matter. Not only is the scale of investigation different, but the theories that govern the world of matter are directly opposed to the laws that govern subatomic behavior [54].

For example, Newton’s first law of motion purports that if an object is moving in a straight line, it will continue moving in a straight line forever, unless it is acted upon by an outside force. This law, a fundamental principle in classical physics, works flawlessly in the macro world. It has led to a belief that the physical world is stable and predictable. Quantum physics, however, proves this to be an incorrect assumption. At the subatomic level, particles do not behave in a predictable manner. They make unexpected and unexplainable quantum leaps which defy rational analysis [55]. At the subatomic level, the parts do not determine the behavior of the whole; rather, the whole determines the behavior of the parts. Subatomic particles can also interact across great distances of time and space, a concept referred to as nonlocal causation which means the interactions between the whole and the parts can never be precisely known [56]. Therefore, classical analytical processes are inadequate for explaining the behavior of subatomic particles.

The theory of quantum mechanics also violates Newton’s second law of motion. This law, which states that every action is accompanied by an equal and opposite reaction, is used to predict the behavior of objects in the macro world. At the subatomic level, particle behavior is impossible to predict due to nonlocal interactions [54]. In quantum physics, statistical probability replaces Newtonian predictability [57].

Newtonian physics assumes the physical world is objective. At the macro level of classical physics, observation does not change the nature of what is being observed. This is not the case at the subatomic level where human observation influences subatomic particle behavior. For example, the expectations of the scientist appear to influence how subatomic particles behave [58]. At the subatomic level, Newtonian objectivity is replaced by quantum subjectivity. Subatomic interactions are not only unexplainable and unpredictable, but they are also, in some yet unidentifiable way, affected by the intentions of their observers [59].

It is apparent that the basic principles of quantum mechanics violate the laws of classical Newtonian physics. Newton’s laws, however, still apply in the observable realm of everyday experience where quantum effects are suppressed, or, at least, camouflaged, by the Principle of Correspondence [57]. This principle, based on a mathematical formula called Planck’s constant, shows that there is a strong relationship between an object’s size and its susceptibility to quantum uncertainty. Consequently, until recently, scientists have been hesitant to apply quantum concepts to human behavior. Opinions are, however, shifting. Recent brain research suggests that we

are, indeed, quantum beings [60, 61]. Humans, like everything else in the universe, are composed of subatomic particles that originated from one common particle pool. Even though humans are material beings, subject to Newton's classical laws, they also have an invisible, nonmaterial dimension (the mind or consciousness) that may function according to quantum principles [59, 62].

5. Identifying the knowing/doing happiness gaps

The research reviewed in this chapter suggests a gap between information in the scientific literature and the worldview of many, if not most, of the world's population. The first of these gaps relates to the subjectivity of human perception and the role of intention. Research in positive psychology and quantum physics demonstrates the subjectiveness of the three-dimensional world. Many people acknowledge that perception is reality; yet it appears that many others base their happiness on subjective, incomplete judgments regarding the material world. Perception research suggests that at least 80% of the information used to create a perception comes from the brain, while only 20% comes from external stimuli [63, 64]. New skills are needed—skills that can assist in neutralizing the tendency for selective perception, perceptual blindness, perceptual constancy, and premature cognitive commitment, all of which can be blocks to happiness [65, 66].

Renowned neuroscientist, Iain McGilchrist [67] writes: "The kind of attention we bring to bear on the world changes the nature of the world we attend to ... Attention changes what kind of a thing comes into being for us: in that way it changes the world" (p. 28). Physicist Fred Alan Wolf agrees. He comments: "How matter appears depends on our minds' choice; reality is a matter of choice" ([64], p. 129). British physicist David Bohm [59] referred to the creation of matter as a cosmic dance choreographed by human perception. The implications for human happiness are self-evident.

A second gap relates to the role of paradox. Western cultures' over-reliance on logical, linear thinking has limited many people's ability to think paradoxically; yet a sustained sense of well-being necessitates paradoxical thinking. We do not live in a black-and-white universe. Opposites can co-exist. Positive psychology 2.0 research purports that authentic happiness necessitates acknowledging, and even embracing, unhappiness [22]. Paradox is also deeply embedded in quantum theory. Energy can manifest as both particle and wave, and the three-dimensional world of matter is composed solely of invisible energy [54].

It is difficult for many people to acknowledge the value of paradoxical or dialectical thinking. Logic and rationality have been highly valued for centuries. Aristotle's (384–322 B.C.) Law of the Excluded Middle paved the way for the Western world's obsession with logical thinking [66]. Yet, the complexities of contemporary society, coupled with radical new scientific discoveries, challenge the current accuracy of Aristotle's law. Recent research in fuzzy logic, based on the premise that the universe is non-binary, is now being widely used to inform the technological revolution [68]; yet many humans are still stuck in either/or thinking, believing things are one way or the other (e.g., good or bad; right or wrong).

Rosch purports that humans' obsession with binary thinking originates in the structure of the brain [68]. Even though the neocortex can create and choose among paradoxical options, many people operate out of the early reptilian and limbic centers which are incapable of conceptualizing seemingly contradictory options.

Additionally, many continue to rely solely on left-brain cognitive processes, thus, perceiving only a limited perspective of “reality,” failing to acknowledge that opposites co-exist. The implications for happiness are again self-evident.

A third knowing/doing gap relates to quantum theory’s proposition that there is an infinite supply of energy in the universe. According to Einstein’s famous formula $E = mc^2$, the energy contained in matter is equal to its mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. Therefore, even the smallest particle of matter contains a huge potential of concentrated energy [53]. The question becomes why do so many people have trouble accessing the physical energy that lies dormant in their bodies? The soaring statistics relating to burnout [69] and depression [70] suggest that many still feel victims of their environments rather than co-creators of their experiences.

Neuroscience research provides insight into solutions by providing evidence of the regenerative power of the human brain—not only to see things differently but to literally re-wire cognitive pathways [44] and to produce and release the so-called happiness and harmony hormones [28, 29]. Unfortunately, many, if not most, still believe happiness is a function of external events rather than a by-product of individual cognitions and behaviors. Taking responsibility for lifestyle decisions such as diet, exercise, sleep and relaxation, as well as paying conscious attention to mental processes, can impact brain chemistry and increase happiness and a sense of well-being [33, 35].

A fourth knowing/doing gap relates to ways of knowing. William James used the word noetic to describe the process of knowing without sensory input [71]. Both quantum theory and neuroscience research demonstrate the limitations of the human senses. Quantum field theory postulates that humans are connected to an infinite field of intelligence that lies beyond sensory perception [55, 72, 73]. Research suggests that mindfulness practices connect humans to this infinite field of possibility. Mindfulness transcends the limitations of the human senses which, due to human perceptual apparatus, always provide limited input. Numerous studies have found that mindfulness practices result in an increased ability to evaluate all possible choices, leading to improved decision-making [74, 75]. Borysenko [76] has found that meditation facilitates “inner listening” and leads to the identification of more creative choices. Increasing dopamine activity in the brain has also been found to be correlated with improved decision-making [77]; and eating high protein food creates increased levels of the precursor for dopamine [31]. These research findings raise questions regarding society’s current focus on collecting and analyzing ever-more Big Data in order to find the right answers.

Fuzzy logic’s Law of Incompatibility is based on the premise that “as complexity rises, precise statements lose meaning and meaningful statements lose precision” ([68], p. 42). This law demonstrates the inverse relationship between the complexity of a situation and the value of ever-more data collection. Attempting to measure complex problems often increases their fuzziness. Human happiness mandates learning to balance sensory input with noetic processing. Reality is larger than any amount of data collected.

The fifth gap relates to the interconnectivity of everything. In quantum theory, two particles, once connected, remain connected even across distances of time and space [54]. Furthermore, due to their quantum entanglement, any measurement of one of these particles impacts the behavior of the second one (Principle of Non-separability). Quantum computers, using the principles of quantum entanglement, are creating once unimaginable technological advances. This same principle has the capacity to transform our view of our relationships with each other and our planet.

Unfortunately, Western cultures with their focus on extreme individuality typically have not recognized the applicability of the non-separability principle to

happiness. However, the neuroscience literature extends this concept to the macro level. For example, fNIRS research demonstrates that when humans connect deeply to others by mirroring body movements and maintaining eye contact, their brains synchronize, resulting in increased empathy and cooperation, as well as an increased sense of well-being [47]. This discovery underscores the impact that humans have on each other. It also suggests that as each person begins to think and act differently, her/his changes can impact the thoughts and behavior of others [78].

The sixth gap relates to the human desire for prediction and control. The stifling of this need often results in frustration and stress. Yet, research in a variety of disparate disciplines shines a spotlight on the futility of this desire. In quantum theory subatomic particles make unexpected quantum leaps that cannot be explained through a process of rational analysis; thus, at the subatomic level, the concept of predictability is null and void. This does not mean that subatomic movements are random. It means they are not the result of a local cause [54]. Wheatley explains ([79], p. 20):

Our inability to predict individual occurrences at the quantum level is not a result of inherent disorder. Instead, the results we observe speak to a level of quantum interconnectedness ... There is so much order that our attempts to separate out discrete moments create the appearance of disorder.

Research in a variety of disciplines suggests that the physical universe is a self-organizing system with intelligence embedded in its structure, evolving into ever higher levels of complexity and coherency [53]. Chaos theory demonstrates how this principle works at the macro level where it has been found that the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Tokyo can influence the weather in New York (the so-called butterfly effect) [80]. At both the subatomic and the macro level, there appears to be an invisible ordering principle at work. If chaos is the engine of evolution, as Prigogine and Stengers [80] suggest, humans need to learn to ride the rapids of change gracefully, trusting in each other and life's self-organizing processes. The well-being literature consistently emphasizes the important role that trust in others plays in creating a sense of well-being [81–83]. Resisting change and resenting chaos decreases the capacity for human happiness, while trust increases a sense of well-being.

The final knowing/doing gap relates to the critical role that relationships play in human happiness and well-being. Classical neuroscience research into the so-called "social brain" demonstrates that humans are hardwired to connect with others [24]. The literature clearly confirms that human connection is required for optimal flourishing. Holt-Lunstad et al. [25] found a 50% increased likelihood of survival for research participants with stronger social networks, regardless of age, sex, or initial health status. Tiwari [27] found that the effect of loneliness on the human body is equivalent to that of smoking a pack of cigarettes each day over many years. Conversely, connection reduces anxiety and depression and releases oxytocin and dopamine; thus, increasing human happiness [26]. Much of the early happiness research focused on individual mastery and personal agency. The research above suggests that more attention must be given to the role relationships play in happiness and well-being.

Relationships also appear to be a basic design feature at the subatomic level, Quantum physics research documents that matter comes into existence only through relationships. Subatomic particles are abstractions whose properties are definable and observable only through their interactions with other particles.

Physics has not, however, always been viewed as a science of relationships. Newton saw particles as distinct entities with rigid boundaries, billiard balls moved around by

external forces [73]. Newtonian objects can influence each other's external behavior, but they cannot change each other's internal characteristics. This is not what happens in a quantum relationship where two particles can actually merge together, sharing boundaries and identities and thereby becoming a quantum system that is greater than the sum of the two individual parts. Research indicates that this "merger" phenomenon can also happen at the level of human consciousness as the brain activity of one person who is physically and sensorily isolated can influence another's brain processes [78].

6. Quantum skills

These quantum physics discoveries, along with research in positive psychology and neuroscience, provide the conceptual foundation for seven quantum skills [53]. These skills are premised on a worldview that characterizes the universe as a dynamic, unpredictable, subjective, self-organizing system rather than as a static, predictable, objective machine. Such a view necessitates new skills that enable humans not only to **see** the world from a new perspective but to **be** in the world in a new way.

These quantum skills are designed to increase a sense of well-being by aligning individual behavior with relevant scientific breakthroughs. Currently, many of the discoveries of the past several decades remain at a level of abstraction that is unusable for those outside the scientific community. These quantum skills are an attempt to pragmatize these new discoveries and integrate them into human behavior so that those who use them can improve their sense of happiness/well-being by re-creating their lives from the inside out.

6.1 Quantum Seeing

The first skill, *Quantum Seeing*, is based on the quantum discovery that the material world is not nearly as objective as most belief. Both quantum theory and research in human perception suggest that over 80 percent of what is seen in the external world is a function of internal assumptions and beliefs. Yet, many people have little regard for the subjectivity of external reality. The word "reality" is derived from the Latin words for think (*revis*) and thing (*res*). Reality, or at least the individual experience thereof, is directly related to those things that humans think about. Zukav ([84], p. 310) explains:

Reality is what we take to be true. What we take to be true is what we believe. What we believe is based upon our perceptions. What we perceive depends upon what we look for. What we look for depends on what we think. What we think depends on what we perceive. What we perceive determines what we believe. What we believe determines what we take to be true. What we take to be true is our reality.

Beliefs reinforce perceptions and perceptions reinforce beliefs; unfortunately, it is not easy to break this cycle. It is learned early and controlled primarily at an unconscious level of awareness. However, it is possible to become more aware of intentions and as intentions change, perceptions shift accordingly. Intention is the psychological process through which reality is constructed [85]. Intentions cause attention to focus on certain stimuli, while a plethora of other perceptual possibilities are totally ignored. The skill of *Quantum Seeing* is a reminder that a life of happiness requires clear intention.

6.2 Quantum Thinking

The second skill, *Quantum Thinking*, is derived from quantum physics research that demonstrates how the physical universe functions in seemingly illogical and paradoxical ways. The most obvious quantum paradox is that the three-dimensional material world is composed solely of invisible energy. Furthermore, this energy often makes sudden, totally unpredictable quantum leaps, tunneling through barriers in ways that are both illogical and impossible at the macro level of reality. For example, subatomic particles can borrow energy from the future to tunnel through barriers that Newtonian objects would be unable to penetrate [86]. This seemingly irrational and illogical process is the basis of a highly sensitive measuring instrument called a SQUID (superconducting quantum interference device). Because of the highly illogical quantum tunneling effect, physicians can now identify and treat minute abnormalities within the human brain. Paradoxical processes can result in highly pragmatic applications. Unfortunately, many people still do not grasp the importance of paradoxical thinking, relying primarily on logical, linear, left-brain cognitive processes.

In order to think more paradoxically, the capacities of the right hemisphere of the brain must be developed. The right brain can gather up seemingly unrelated ideas and arrange them into highly creative idea constellations, thereby, bypassing the left brain's propensity for binary thinking. The right brain hemisphere has another important creative advantage. It can process millions of visual images in microseconds and solve problems exponentially faster than the clock-bound left hemisphere. Thus, through the process of imagistic thinking people can escape the tyranny of time and enter a realm where seemingly opposite options can effortlessly superimpose themselves into highly creative solutions [87]. The skill of *Quantum Thinking* is a prerequisite for discovering creative solutions to the complex, paradoxical challenges of the twenty-first century.

6.3 Quantum Feeling

The third skill, *Quantum Feeling*, is based on the premise that humans are composed of the same energy as the rest of the universe and are, therefore, subject to universal laws of energy excitation. Research at the Institute of HeartMath suggests that the human heart is a primary source of power for the mind-body system [88]. The heart generates the strongest electromagnetic signal in the human body and the power of that signal is primarily a function of thoughts and emotions. Negative emotions (e.g., frustration, fear, anger, conflict, and stress) decrease coherence in the heart's electromagnetic waves, causing the mind-body system to lose energy. Positive emotions (e.g., love, caring, compassion, and appreciation) increase coherence, thus increasing energy. This research confirms what many already know intuitively. Negative emotions exhaust and positive emotions energize. Knowing this to be true does not, however, solve the pervasive epidemic of stress and conflict. Fast-paced schedules drain energy. Stress-filled jobs exhaust. Interpersonal differences create conflict. The skill of *Quantum Feeling* enables people to feel good internally, regardless of what happens externally.

Using this skill requires learning how to harmonize opposite feelings. The participants in Delle Fave et al.'s Eudaimonic and Hedonic Happiness research project selected "harmony" as the most important self-rated component of happiness. Harmony was defined as "balancing opposite elements into a whole" ([12], p. 199).

The ability to balance the inevitable positive and negative aspects of living appears to be foundational to happiness. As people use the skill of *Quantum Feeling*, they become alchemists, learning how to change the chemistry of their bodies by harmonizing their internal feelings and making external lifestyle choices that lead to increased levels of dopamine and oxytocin. Using this skill increases awareness of the perceptual choice point between an external stimulus and a subsequent internal response and leads to the recognition that human happiness is not diminished by people or events, but rather by perceptual and lifestyle choices.

6.4 Quantum Knowing

The fourth skill, *Quantum Knowing*, is derived from quantum field theory. Energy fields are, in the language of quantum theory, the ground state of all that is. Einstein once commented that “fields are the only reality” ([55], p. 211). The universe is not filled with energy fields; rather, the universe emerges out of an underlying quantum field. This underlying sea of potential appears to be infinite, omnipresent, and omnipotent. It is both indescribable and incalculable. The quantum field is believed to contain Bose–Einstein condensates which are the most highly ordered and highly unified structure yet found in the universe. Zohar [73] is one of a growing number of physicists who believe that Bose–Einstein processes in the brain may create the neurological structures that are prerequisites to human consciousness. If subsequent research validates a relationship between Bose–Einstein condensates and consciousness, it will lend support to the hypothesis that the quantum field itself is conscious. Consciousness, therefore, may not be a function of evolutionary sophistication, but instead may be the primary substance of physical reality. Wald ([72], pp. 1-2) explains:

Mind, rather than emerging as a late outgrowth in the evolution of life, has existed always as the matrix, the source and condition of physical reality ... the stuff of which physical reality is composed is mind-stuff. It is the mind that has composed a physical universe that breeds life, and so eventually evolves creatures that know and create.

The universe is basically a set of signals or a field of information. It is much more like a Great Thought than the Great Machine metaphor of the Newtonian paradigm. *Quantum Knowing* is the ability to know intuitively—to connect in non-sensory ways with information in this quantum field of potentiality. Langer’s theory of mindful decision-making suggests that gathering information does not necessarily lead to better decisions [75]. Reducing uncertainty through data collection is futile because even the amount of information that could be gathered about the simplest of decisions, such as buying a computer, can involve limitless research. Rather than focusing on gathering information, Langer’s theory focuses on staying aware (mindfulness) [75]. Mindfulness is a prerequisite to transcending the limitations of the human sensory apparatus. It opens a connection to the quantum field of infinite information. Langer points out that a belief in “certainty” is actually a huge disadvantage. Certainty leads to mindlessness. When one is certain, s/he typically ceases to pay attention. However, uncertainty increases attentiveness both to external conditions and to internal intuitions. *Quantum Knowing* is the ability to live mindfully and know intuitively. It is a critical skill for sustaining a sense of well-being in the fast-paced, complex decision-making environment of the twenty-first century.

6.5 Quantum Acting

The fifth skill, *Quantum Acting*, is premised on the quantum concept of non-separability and its byproduct, non-local causation. At the subatomic level, two systems once connected remain connected, even across great distances of time and space. Any measurement of one of these systems affects the second system instantaneously. These complex “from a distance” interactions are explained by a uniquely quantum principle, the principle of non-separability, which violates the most basic principle of relatively—that nothing can travel faster than the speed of light. Even though Einstein never accepted the principle of non-separability, today this principle is a fundamental concept in quantum theory. One technological application is the development of quantum computers that have the capacity for all their components to respond instantaneously to a change in the state of one component. The capacity of quantum computers is breathtaking. This technology is still in its infancy, yet quantum computers are already capable of performing all possible computations simultaneously (quantum parallelism). Strings of hydrogen atoms hold bits of information rather than arrays of transistors. Atomic encoding enables a quantum computer to simulate the behavior of any quantum system using quantum processes such as superimposition and nonlocal correlation.

Non-local causation, also referred to as quantum entanglement, is transforming life as it is presently known through astounding technological advances; but more importantly, this same principle has the potential to shift our view of ourselves and our relationship to others and the physical universe. Gribbin ([89], p. 229) explains why:

They (research studies) tell us that particles that were once together in an interaction remain in some sense parts of a single system, which responds together to further interactions. Virtually everything we see and touch and feel is made up of collections of particles that have been involved in interactions with others right back through time, to the Big Bang in which the universe as we know it came into being. The atoms in my body are made of particles that once jostled in close proximity in the cosmic fireball with particles that are now part of a distant star, and particles that form the body of some living creature on some distant, undiscovered planet. Indeed, the particles that make up my body once jostled in close proximity and interacted with the particles that make up your body.

Everything in the universe is a part of a correlated, complex whole in which each part influences and is influenced by every other part. *Quantum Acting* is the ability to act with concern for the whole—the whole self, the whole community, and the whole planet. This skill can be used to design lives of impeccable action—lives that focus on intentions that are good for both the individual and the larger system. Each responsible choice not only influences that individual’s future choices; it also, because of quantum entanglement, influences the future choices of others as well. Everyone is in non-local correlation with everyone (and everything) else, and each action influences the well-being of the whole system.

6.6 Quantum Trusting

The sixth skill, *Quantum Trusting*, is the ability to trust life, recognizing that we live in an intelligent universe. Bohm’s concept of subatomic particles with “quantum potential” suggests that directions received from the quantum field influence the

behavior of subatomic particles [90]. Bohm acknowledges that this potential has such complexity that any attempts at prediction are futile; however, our inability to make predictions does not mean that a system's evolution is totally random. It simply means that it cannot be explained.

Bohm's concept of an invisible ordering principle applies to the subatomic world of quantum phenomena. Chaos theory, based on classical physics and applicable to the macroscopic world, has a similar concept, the strange attractor. This is a computer term used to trace the evolution of a chaotic system. As chaos theory would predict, a computerized system in chaos behaves in a totally unpredictable manner. However, over time even the most chaotic systems never go beyond certain phase space boundaries, the boundary of the strange attractor. Strange attractors provide visual images of a world in which structure emerges out of chaos. Structured chaos is a remarkable paradox. It suggests that we function in a universe that is both orderly and chaotic, a world that displays structure without clockwork regularity—potentiality without predictability.

Quantum Trusting is the ability to trust life's ever-evolving process. As people learn this skill, they begin to focus on the mystery of existence, rather than on their mastery over it. They become less intent on manipulating life and more intent on appreciating it. Happiness often comes unexpectedly when people release their obsession with searching for it and learn to trust life and each other. Learning how to trust life's process by releasing the need to predict and control outcomes is an important skill, and a critical step towards happiness and well-being.

6.7 Quantum Being

The seventh skill, *Quantum Being*, is based on the relational structure of the universe. At the quantum level, matter comes into existence only through relationships. At the human level, neuroscience research regarding the so-called social brain demonstrates that the brain is hard-wired for connectivity [25]. At the level of human behavior, the literature suggests a wide range of social variables that correlate with happiness and well-being ranging from time spent with family and friends to participation in social, civic, religious, and volunteer activities [91–93]. Some scholars believe that relational factors are the most robust correlates of subjective well-being [81]. Joshanloo [1] notes that the relationship of positive interpersonal relationships to happiness appears as a key factor in both Eastern and Western research studies, though activities associated with relationships may be expressed in culturally diverse ways [94].

Quantum Being is the ability to create and sustain healthy relationships. It is through relationship that human potential is released. When relationships are approached with openness and vulnerability, change happens. These encounters often provoke unresolved issues and reopen psychological wounds, thus giving each party the opportunity to learn and heal or deny and project. Authentic relationships are, therefore, psychological mirrors. In them, people can see themselves reflected.

The skill of *Quantum Being* requires that humans own their feelings rather than project them onto others. As they learn to do so, they discover that all relationships are extraordinary learning opportunities; and they begin to suspect that none of them occur without reason. They also discover that those who have the most to teach them are not always their favorite people, but they are valuable contributors to their psychological well-being.

7. Summary and future recommendations

Over 50 years ago renowned psychiatrist Carl Jung predicted a conceptual integration of psychology and physics. He wrote [95]:

Sooner or later, nuclear physics and the psychology of the unconscious will draw closer together as both of them, independently of one another, and from opposite directions, push forward ... If research could only advance far enough, therefore, we should arrive at an ultimate agreement between physical and psychological concepts (p. 261).

The era that Jung foresaw has arrived. Research has now identified common themes in disciplines as diverse as psychology and physics. Unfortunately, these discoveries have impacted the material world more than the subjective realm of well-being. For example, discoveries in quantum mechanics enabled a technological revolution that has totally transformed society over the past 100 years; however, these discoveries have not yet led to a significant shift in human beliefs or behaviors. This chapter attempts to do so by showing the relationship of these quantum breakthroughs to other paradigm-breaking research in positive psychology and neuroscience and integrating these findings into a set of quantum skills.

The research suggests that as humans master these seven quantum skills, they will learn to more fully utilize both of the brain's hemispheres and greatly expand the capacity of the brain's highest processing center, the neocortex. In so doing, they will be able to transcend the basic survival programming of our ancient reptilian brains (the R-complex) and the pain/pleasure mechanisms of the limbic system. Wade's research [60] suggests that as people learn to fully utilize the capacity of the neocortex, conscious awareness increases; thus, giving increased ability to make conscious choice regarding thoughts and actions that support well-being.

The authors hypothesize that using these quantum skills will result in increased happiness as measured by a subjective sense of well-being. Research is needed to test the efficacy of these skills to accomplish this hypothesized result. Such a project would need to be based on a culturally inclusive definition of happiness that aligns with the research reviewed in this chapter. Future opportunities for disseminating these quantum skills include the design of a comprehensive, cross-cultural curriculum for teaching these skills at a variety of age levels. This chapter is a call for the academic community to test and teach these skills, thus reducing the current knowing/doing gap and helping to create global flourishing.

Author details

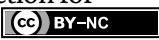
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A Path to Happiness

Sara Spowart

Abstract

Happiness may be viewed as a subjective state where one feels generally content with their life condition and levels of wellbeing. However, happiness can be a complex and vague topic that requires clarity, questioning and discernment. Important factors that impact happiness include authentic connection, mental illness, cultural values, compassion, gratitude and social support. These factors and others are explored throughout this chapter. A theory titled the “Integrative Theory of Happiness” is proposed that encompasses multiple aspects of wellbeing. A comparison of United States and Latin America cultural values is compared to better understand foundations of happiness. This chapter provides insight, overview and a deeper understanding of some of the most noteworthy factors of happiness from a global perspective.

Keywords: happiness, well-being, mental health, happiness theory, connection

1. Introduction

Although it may not always be clear, the guiding principle both consciously and unconsciously for many endeavors is happiness. In general, a majority of our behavior is decided by what we think or feel will have the greatest benefit and the least amount of negative consequence. This principle can be applied and understood in a range of circumstances that include situations of absolute poverty and violence, to situations of the most wealthy and privileged. Individuals generally act from a position of doing whatever they believe is most positive for themselves with the least amount of negative consequence. Yet, this positive to negative balance in decision-making and behavior is based on one’s own belief system and understanding. If an individual believes they will feel best through altruistic behavior, they will act in ways they believe are altruistic whenever possible. If one believes they will feel best by being (what they perceive to be) negative, they may act negatively whenever possible. If one believes fame or wealth leads to happiness, they will likely focus on achieving wealth or fame. If one believes sex, relationships, or a certain body image leads to happiness, they may focus on this for their sense of well-being. In some cases, individuals feel that engaging in harmful behaviors such as self-cutting, drug and alcohol abuse, lying, gambling, new relationships, overspending, abnormal eating, etc. is the way to feel happiest. The point is that the individual belief system is the determining factor in the decision-making process [1, 2].

Therefore, investigating one’s belief system is important for identifying the logic and inaccuracies regarding happiness. When one’s belief system is not investigated

or questioned, the result can be ongoing, reactive, unconscious behaviors and patterns. Through the use of mindfulness methods, conscious belief restructuring, an ongoing investigation of reactive patterns, and learning information on what actually improves happiness, an individual's happiness levels can substantially improve. This chapter provides an overview of some faulty and effective cultural belief systems that impact happiness and wellbeing, as well as data on the most important factors for happiness. A general integrative theory of happiness is proposed at the end of the chapter that integrates this data into a more concise framework for understanding [1, 2].

2. Overview on happiness

First, let us discuss what is meant by happiness in this chapter. Happiness here is defined as a subjective state where one feels content with their lives overall and is mostly satisfied by their life condition. However, the experience of happiness can also be cultural in perspective and related to comparing one's life to that of others. For example, in the United States the cultural philosophy is to define well-being through Gross Domestic Product or GDP, not through Gross National Happiness (GNH) levels. GNH was created by the government of Bhutan and is the method the government uses to measure its population's well-being and collective happiness. With the creation of the GNH index, Bhutan has become a symbol for prioritizing happiness as part of its society and culture. By contrast, the United States generally stands out as valuing happiness through economic growth, wealth and production. The World Happiness Reports further supports this by demonstrating that the United States highly values money and economic growth as a measure of well-being [3].

In consideration of the different cultural and national approaches to well-being, the Easterlin Paradox is also relevant. The Easterlin Paradox was identified by Richard Easterlin in 1974. He was the first economist to research happiness data. He found that there is a certain point where happiness varies directly with income among and within countries. However, over time happiness does not continue to increase in an upward direction even if income continues to grow. Another way of explaining this is that once an individual is out of absolute poverty or a certain level of poverty in their society, there are more significant factors impacting one's level of happiness. Income and wealth are not the ultimate determining factors for happiness. However, they are likely the most significant variables in general when an individual is living in absolute poverty [3].

The World Happiness Reports, first initiated in 2012 also further supports data regarding the relationship between income, happiness and absolute poverty. The World Happiness Reports are publications from independent experts and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network in conjunction with Gallup World Poll data. This collection of data is a vital joint assessment and resource for ongoing trends regarding current world happiness levels, relevant findings and aberrations in our understandings of happiness. The data from the World Happiness Reports also demonstrates, in conjunction with the Easterlin Paradox, that once an individual is no longer living in a state of absolute poverty, economics are not the most important factor for well-being and happiness. If one is out of absolute poverty, there are other important factors for happiness such as mental health, authentic connections, and belief systems that become more significant [4, 5].

3. Latin America case study

To better understand the differences in data and findings regarding happiness research, it is worthwhile to consider case studies of both positive and negative outliers. Latin America has demonstrated itself to be an unusual and unexpected positive outlier in research on happiness data. A major component identified in Latin America is the priority of happiness and close relationships as a part of purpose and life value. The data from the World Happiness Reports demonstrates that in Latin America there is a focus on happiness, relationships and love as a valuable and worthwhile life endeavor. In general, this may be considered more valuable than the individual attainment of status and wealth. In essence, the belief system regarding happiness is generally different with a greater concentration and focus on daily happiness, love and connection [6–8].

The greater focus on happiness, love and connection as a daily value in Latin America is in line with some research on mindfulness which highlights that just by noticing things on a day-to-day basis you increase the frequency of the lived experience. For example, the more you focus on anxiety and attaching to feelings of anxiety, the more the anxiety escalates. The more you focus on feelings of sadness and triggers for depressive thoughts and feelings, the more these increase. Our belief system plays an important role in what we focus on and then this becomes more cemented through neuropathways in the brain. The more we have certain types, frequency and concentration of thoughts, the greater the concentration of neuropathways in the brain regarding those thought-forms. Therefore, in the case of Latin America, if there are stronger cultural norms for focusing on happiness, love and connection on a day-to-day basis, this may create more of that lived experience through perception and regular focus [6–9].

4. United States case study

Another unique case study within the Gallup World Poll data and the World Happiness Reports is the United States. The United States has seen declining levels of well-being for over a decade despite regular increases in GDP every year. The United States case study demonstrates that past a certain level of wealth, happiness and well-being do not continue to increase. Also, as Latin America reflects the importance of family and social support, the United States demonstrates the importance of family and social support in an inverse manner. Specifically, through the issues of loneliness, fragmented social and family relationships, broken social communities and the rise of addiction and mental illness, one can see the important role that relationships, community and connections play in happiness and wellbeing [10–12].

In the United States, income per person has increased approximately three times since 1960, but happiness and well-being levels have not increased. Most recently, since 2013 per capita GDP has continued to rise but happiness levels have fallen. This is in direct contrast to conventionally held beliefs on the relationship between per capita GDP and wellbeing. It also demonstrates the Easterlin Paradox. The US was ranked 3rd among 23 OECD countries in 2007 for happiness and wellbeing, and fell to 19th of 34 OECD countries in 2016. From 2006 to 2016 the United States level of social support, experience of personal freedom, and amount of charitable donations all declined, while the perception of government and business corruption increased.

These factors point to a reality that the falling happiness, mental health and wellbeing levels in the United States are due to a social, not an economic crisis [10–12].

The data comparing 2006/2007 wellbeing levels demonstrates that repairing social norms and conditions back to 2006/2007 levels would most quickly and reliably create the gains in happiness needed to improve mental health and wellbeing. The issues with social concerns in the United States are not insignificant. Trust in the government is currently at its lowest level in modern history as is the perception of a rise in corruption. Income inequality is at its highest levels in US history with the top 1% experiencing nearly all the gains from economic growth in the last few decades and the lower 50% continuing to experience greater poverty. This phenomenon shows that there is an expanding lower class and a decreasing middle class in the United States. Furthermore, research conducted in the US compared to other countries found that helping behaviors in the US have declined sharply from 2001 to 2011 compared to other developed countries. However, the decline in US happiness levels is not only a social crisis, it is also a health crisis that is being shown in increased mortality rates. This increase in mortality rates is directly associated with drug and alcohol abuse, suicidal ideation, obesity and mental illness [10–12].

Major factors in the United States contribute to the decline in social and family connections, support, loneliness and isolation. These include the rise in addiction and the addiction crisis in the United States. There has been an ongoing crisis with heroin and methamphetamine use, and currently there is a growing fentanyl overdose crisis. During the COVID-pandemic more Americans died every day from drug overdoses than from COVID-19. Addiction leaves not only a potentially lethal crisis for the individual, but also causes severe damage to families, relationships and society as a whole. It leads to higher levels of crime, violence and greater mistrust among people. It harms society on many levels and contributes to the overall decreasing levels of American happiness. The data shows that improving and repairing social conditions is the most effective way to increase and improve US levels of happiness. This may require changes in government policy and cultural values to successfully achieve [10–12].

5. Mental health: a significant happiness variable

Aside from the above discussed variables, the most significant variable according to the World Happiness Reports for happiness is mental health. Mental illness is a worldwide health phenomenon. Mental illness does not only occur in wealthy countries as has been stereotypically believed. The most recent data from the World Gallup Poll and the World Happiness Reports demonstrates that the vast majority of individuals with mental illness live in low and middle-income regions of the world. The majority of these mental health conditions relate to anxiety and depression disorders. In 2013, at least 1 in 10 people suffered globally from these conditions at any one time. These numbers are even higher today. Furthermore, the 2013 statistic is likely to be lower than actual prevalence rates given stigma and cultural considerations in reporting, the understanding of mental illness and availability of access to data [13, 14].

Child and adolescent behavior and mental health issues further contribute to prevalence rates with an additional estimated 100 million cases worldwide. Prevalence rates are significant between countries but there is much less variation when groups of countries are clustered together by income level. In 2013, the World Health Organization estimated that 7.1% of adults in high income countries suffered from

depression, 7.6% in upper middle-income, 6.4% in lower middle income and 6% in low income. The data also reflects that among those with depression, there is a much higher number of women than men. Depression represents the greatest disability factor according to the World Health Organization. This data has been further supportive in identifying a relationship between mental illness and national levels of happiness. In Western, Eastern and Central Europe, those who suffer from anxiety and depression experience 12–14 years of lived disability due to their condition [13, 14].

A major consideration in the incredible burden of mental illness is the lack of adequate mental health care and treatment for those who are suffering. There is a significant worldwide treatment gap between identified need and actual service provision. In 2013, the treatment gap for schizophrenia for example was approximately 32%. However, even more telling, for all other conditions including more commonly identified issues such as anxiety, depression, and alcohol dependence, the treatment gap was greater than 50%. Worse than this, even when disability due to mental illness is severe, the treatment gap is still very significant. In 2013, only 10–30% of severe cases received services in low and middle-income countries compared to 25–60% in high income regions. The countries with the highest rates of treatment services included the United States, Spain, and Belgium for severe, moderate and mild mental illness [13, 14].

This treatment gap has severe consequences for society. Untreated mental illness creates major costs to society that come not only in monetary form but also through strained use of the healthcare system, lost productivity, educational underachievement, increased levels of violence, addiction, crime, less effective use of resources, breakdown of social and family relationships, worsening physical health and obesity, and lower overall development of human and societal potential. Treatment for mental illness has important implications for life expectancy, quality of life and the burden of disability. For example, admittance to the hospital for mental health reasons improves life expectancy by an estimated 15–20 years [13, 14].

Despite its demonstrated significance for health, economic and societal outcomes, no country in the world spends more than 15% of their health budget on mental healthcare. Mental health is one of the greatest factors for one's levels of happiness and is connected to one's closest relationships, experience of love, family and support. Positive outlier countries such as England and Wales spend close to 15% of their health budget on mental health. They have seen major improvements in years and cost due to disability as a result of increased access and use of mental health services. The mental health programs in England and Wales have demonstrated that there are low-cost and effective mental health treatments that can be made widely available. There is now a significant body of evidence for the societal and economic harm caused by the lack of mental health treatment in a population. It is economically progressive and increases national happiness levels to incorporate large scale mental health programs [13, 14].

6. Authentic connection: a significant happiness variable

Another important variable for happiness is authentic connection and relationships. One of the most significant studies for understanding happiness has been the Harvard Study of Adult Development. This is one of the world's longest running studies on adult development and the factors that contribute to health and happiness.

In 1938 during the Great Depression, researchers created the Harvard Study of Adult Development with Dr. Grant and Dr. Glueck. This was a study intended to track the happiness and health of adults throughout the lifespan. The first cohort consisted of 268 Harvard sophomores all approximately 19 years old, Caucasian, male and from the Harvard classes of 1939–1944. The second cohort consisted of a group of 456 Caucasian men from Boston neighborhoods. The men in the second cohort were selected at ages 11–16 years by Drs. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck and many were from lower-income neighborhoods and families. At present, a majority of these participants have passed away and the study is being continued through participation from their children and grandchildren. With the original Harvard and Boston City cohorts there was physical and mental health testing done every 2 years, 5 years and 5–10 years. The participants completed questionnaires every 2 years on their physical and mental health, job enjoyment, the quality of their marriages, and other significant variables. The participants provided health data every 5 years regarding their physical health, and in-depth interviews every 5–10 years on their relationships, work and life changes [15, 16].

This study has been very significant and supports the Easterlin Paradox as well as the data found in the World Happiness Reports regarding Latin America and the United States for happiness. It found that the most important factor in happiness and well-being is the quality of our authentic connections and close relationships. Significant major themes identified from this study are that authentic connections are critical and loneliness causes significant mental and physical health concerns. Another important finding was that in our relationships the most relevant factor in our happiness is the quality of our closest relationships, not the number of social connections or whether you have a committed relationship. It was identified that the experience of loneliness was significant for levels of unhappiness. Loneliness here refers to the perception of isolation and experience of unwanted absence of social connection and closeness with others. It causes psychological pain and can result in depression, anxiety, and other physical and mental health concerns. At least 1 in 5 individuals in the U.S. experiences loneliness at any time and this has negative implications on longevity, well-being and happiness. This number is projected to increase globally in regions with growing elderly populations and decreased family support. The Harvard Study of Adult Development shows very clearly that close relationships are vital for protecting our bodies and our brains. In summary, according to this study, the most significant predictor of happiness is the experience of positive, authentic connection [15, 16].

7. Proposed happiness theory framework

An overview of the above-discussed elements regarding happiness demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive theoretical framework to understand happiness. Certain underlying factors can be identified from the data we currently have to create an integrative framework. The inclusion of mindfulness and present moment awareness, belief system reflection and restructuring, mental health and biology are all important components for an integrative happiness framework. Other significant aspects include the factors of empathy, compassion, gratitude and acceptance. This integrative framework is referred to as an “Integrative Theory of Happiness” for the remainder of this chapter [15–18].

An Integrative Theory of Happiness is significant because happiness is largely a subjective experience and qualifiers for individual life satisfaction and well-being may

change throughout the life span. Therefore, an adaptable framework that addresses changing life situations but also constant underlying components is needed. Central components of mindfulness, biology and belief systems are critical for this framework. Mindfulness and present moment awareness are significant because much unhappiness is caused by mental thought patterns directed excessively on the past and negative projections about the future. The practice of learning to maintain concentration and focus on the present moment helps one to more directly address issues in their current life circumstances with greater clarity and attention. It assists in creating greater insight and the ability to make positive behavior and thought pattern changes. It also helps with concentration on new thought patterns and feelings and increasing positive affect [9, 17, 19].

Biology is another central component in the Integrative Theory of Happiness. It has been established in many models of development that in general, one's basic biological needs should be met to attain adequate happiness levels. This includes aspects such as sufficient sleep, food, water, exercise, and a healthy weight. It also refers to concerns regarding neurochemistry levels of dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin in the brain and body. In addition to this is the importance of neuroplasticity and neural networks in the brain. Specifically, the understanding that what we focus on everyday throughout the day, reinforces and creates neural network pathways that strengthen certain thought and feeling patterns. By mindfully and intentionally focusing on positive thoughts and feelings, this can create new neuropathways in the brain so that an individual perceives and responds to a situation differently. Through intentional focus and mindfulness concentrated on thoughts that increase happiness, the brain can function towards a more positive overall perception [9, 17, 19].

Lastly, the element of belief systems is another central component for happiness within the Integrative Theory of Happiness. The element of belief systems has an array of significant components such as one's beliefs about themselves, their values, their relationships, their purpose, their life, etc. Possibly most importantly here is the understanding of one's own beliefs about happiness in comparison to how one is living. In the assessment of this element there is also the identification, restructuring and reframing of harmful, unhelpful or negative belief systems. This should also help to increase empathy, compassion and connection with others as well as improve relationships. This element in the framework addresses beliefs on authentic connection, gratitude, compassion, empathy and acceptance [17–19].

Research from Dr. Gottman is revealing here for its perspective on the power of positive thought and emotion patterns. Specifically, Dr. Gottman found in his research through the Gottman Institute that one of the most important components of happiness is the quality of our close relationships and support system. They identified a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative emotions in conflict that is needed to maintain healthy connections. They also identified the significance of empathy, feelings of security, appreciation, and calm for maintaining positive connections. The concepts identified in their research can also be applied to a larger framework and understanding for the relationship we have with ourselves [20, 21].

Dr. Gottman points to the 'small things often' approach. This is a form of active mindfulness through the noticing and application of positive thoughts, feelings and behaviors throughout the everyday experience. This theory is that small, deliberate, regular positive efforts over time have a major impact on the well-being of relationships. However, this is also true regarding belief systems in terms of happiness. By making numerous, small, positive thoughts, feelings and behaviors a priority on a day-to-day basis one can change the experience of individual wellness over a lifespan [20, 21].

Part of understanding and addressing this ‘small things often’ approach is for individuals to continually understand what is worth focusing on and what is counter-productive for their happiness. As mentioned above, the aspects of empathy, compassion, gratitude, and acceptance are all important for happiness levels in conjunction with authentic positive connection. Empathy here refers to the ability to recognize, understand and share the thoughts and feelings of another being. It is a critical part of positive relationships and also helps increase levels of personal happiness. Empathy allows an individual the ability to understand painful circumstances and interactions from multiple perspectives instead of one’s own limited viewpoint. It provides a greater bird’s eye view that can decrease negative emotions in troubling and disturbing situations through better insight and understanding [22].

Another component of the proposed framework is compassion. Compassion is related to empathy in many ways. Compassion may include empathy and is another characteristic that can help increase individual happiness levels. It refers here to understanding or having empathy for another person’s pain and then working to alleviate their suffering. Compassion can be applied to a person but it can also include other living creatures such as animals. Compassion is from the Latin root meaning “to suffer together.” Compassion can improve individual levels of happiness because like empathy, it gives greater insight and perspective into challenging situations and negative or harmful behaviors. Also, self-compassion is a very strong protector and support for individual well-being in almost any circumstance. Self-compassion is the kindness and understanding you give to yourself and your own suffering [23, 24].

The other identified factors in this proposed framework are acceptance and gratitude. These two factors are in many ways tied together. Acceptance and gratitude involve not resisting, reacting negatively and fighting against unwanted circumstances. These factors require a shift in perspective from observing what one feels is negative or neutral, to observing the positive and good. These factors allow for greater flexibility and adaptability to unexpected or unwanted changes in life and helps one to be happy in a multitude of circumstances. Concepts referred to as Radical Acceptance and Radical Gratitude exemplify the value of these variables as well as their practical application. Radical acceptance may be seen as the ability to accept without judgment, situations that are beyond one’s control. It promotes non-attachment as a method to increase subjective well-being and happiness levels. Radical gratitude is another approach that is effective in conjunction with acceptance. It promotes the perspective of thankfulness and appreciation to everything in life. This includes embracing and being appreciative not only for the positive but for what is perceived as negative. It can be a powerful transformative tool to alter one’s perspective of unhappiness and anger at the way things are, to appreciation and insight into the value of the way things are. It can also promote detachment and letting go. These two concepts can be applied together to improve individual levels of well-being and manage almost any negative circumstance one encounters. They can be applied to belief systems to help reframe and empower an individual to feel more hopeful, positive and in control of their life [25, 26].

Taken together, the elements of gratitude, compassion, acceptance and empathy are significant in conjunction with authentic connection for improved levels of happiness and wellbeing. In addition to this, the approach of small things being important is worthwhile to apply for happiness. By noticing small ways to improve gratitude, compassion, acceptance, empathy and authentic connection throughout our day and every day, we can alter step by step our levels of happiness. In this way, through day-by-day mindful noticing and application of these variables, one’s perspective, brain, body and mind can experience improved levels of happiness and wellbeing.

8. Conclusion

The research from the World Happiness Reports demonstrates that once an individual is not living in absolute poverty, the most important factor for happiness and well-being is the quality of one's authentic positive connections. The factors identified in the Integrative Happiness Theory are significant for the human experience, the well-being of societies, families, and even the economies of nations. To deny or devalue the significance of authentic positive connections, gratitude, empathy, compassion and acceptance is to undermine a very important piece of happiness. It is also denying something that has great meaning for the human experience. For many parts of the world, a general cultural or societal shift may be needed to better highlight these factors and be considered valuable. If the importance of authentic positive connection, gratitude, empathy, acceptance and compassion is not better emphasized in countries such as the United States, it could lead to even greater declines in happiness and worsening social deterioration. It is a worthwhile investment to incorporate these factors as an approach to increase happiness levels on a large scale.

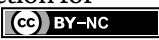
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This book is a collection of chapters on happiness and well-being. It includes contributions from scientists from all over the world, who present different, multifaceted, dialectically open perspectives and sensitivities regarding happiness. The authors discuss happiness and well-being from biological, biopsychosocial, anthropological, and philosophical points of view.

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