

LIFE SATISFACTION AND WELL - BEING

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Abstract

Life satisfaction is the way persons evaluate their lives and how they feel about where they are going in the future. It is a measure of well-being and may be assessed in terms of mood, satisfaction of interrelationship, achieved goals, self-concepts, and self-perceived ability to cope up with daily life. It is having a favorable attitude of one's life as a whole rather than an assessment of current feelings. Life satisfaction has been measured in relation to economic standing, amount of education, experiences, and residence, as well as many other issues. Life satisfaction depends solely on happy and meaningful life. Happier people therefore wanted to promote a happier environment, which then correlates to a higher level of the person's satisfaction with his or her life. There are two main domains of research traditions on well-being (Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff, 2002). One tradition referred to subjective well-being which deals with happiness and investigates factors related to self-assessed life satisfaction in general or applied to specific areas of one's life. Whereas the other tradition referred to psychological well-being which focuses on human potential reflected the personal growth and sense of control over one's actions and purpose in life. Hence this article attempted to analyze life satisfaction in relation to different contexts.

Keywords: *Life Satisfaction, Well Being, Happiness, Quality of life, Education and Succes.*

Introduction

Well-being and psychological well-being encompass many aspects of good mental health. According to the World Health Organization, positive mental health incorporates the state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make contributions to the community (WHO, 2007). It also defines mental health as a positive sense of well being encompassing the physical, mental, social, basic economic, and spiritual aspects of life; not just the absence of disease. Subjective well-being emerged in the late 1950s in the search for useful indicators of quality of life to monitor social change and improve social policy. The two main indicators of subjective well-being that emerged from this research were life satisfaction and happiness. Life satisfaction reflects individuals' perceived distance from their aspirations (Campbell, et al 1976). Happiness results from a balance between positive and negative affect (Bradburn, 1969). The technological revolution of our modern time has encompassed human existence.

Its influence remains inevitable and significantly evident in every domain of life; from food to entertainment, from travel to study, from sleep to work, and from communication to health. In fact, the fruits of contemporary technology remain ambivalent to humans. While it offers a great benefit and advancement for human well-being, it also poses serious harms and difficulties, leaving an individual to love it and at the same time be afraid of it. This necessitates an elaborative discussion on contemporary trends and its influence on psychological well-being of individuals and social institutions. Hence, this article intends to bring together the views of academicians and researchers across the globe to dissect, explore and evaluate the impact on the well being of individuals and groups. The main goal of this article is to cull out new directions within the available scientific literature, and thus to optimize the prospects of well being and to minimize the ill-effects to the well-being of individuals and community.

Objectives

1. To understand the concept of life satisfaction and well -being
2. To identify the factors influencing life satisfaction and well -being

The Factors Influencing Life Satisfaction and Well - Being

It has been suggested that there are several factors that contribute towards our happiness.

Life Satisfaction

- Life-review therapy using Autobiographical Retrieval Practice for older adults with depressive symptoms, in a study carried out by Serrano JP, Latorre JM, Gatz M, and Montanes J. Department of Psychology at Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, demonstrated that, with increased specificity of memories, individuals showed the decreased depression and hopelessness and increased life satisfaction.
- A test was designed to measure participants' ability to recall a specific memory, in response to a cue word, while being timed. Thirty cue words; including five words classified as 'positive' (e.g., *funny, lucky, passionate, happy, hopeful*), five as 'negative' (*unsuccessful, unhappy, sad, abandoned, gloomy*), and five as 'neutral' (*work, city, home, shoes, family*); were presented orally in a fixed, alternating order to each member of a focus group.
- To ensure the participants' ability to understand the instructions, examples were provided of both 'general' memories (e.g., summers in the city) and 'specific' memories (e.g., the day one got married). For each cue word, participants were asked to share a memory evoked by that word. Accordingly an event that should have occurred only once, at a particular time and place which had lasted no longer than a day.
- If the person could not recall a memory within 30 seconds, then that cue instance was not counted. Two Psychologists served as raters and independently scored the responses of each participant. Each memory was tagged either as 'specific' - if the recalled event lasted no more than one day - or, otherwise, as 'general'. The raters were not informed regarding the hypotheses of the study in order to get correct assessment.

Life satisfaction and Personality

- One of the most studied concepts of personality is the big five model with dimensions of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. In a research carried out by Deneve and Cooper in 1998, multiple studies were analyzed and certain personality questionnaires that linked subjective well-being (SWB) and personality measures.
- They found that neuroticism was the strongest predictor of life satisfaction and negative affect while the personality measure 'openness to experience' correlated equally to life satisfaction and positive affect. Amongst other personality traits chronotype which is defined as a person's *chronotype* is the propensity for the individual to sleep at a particular time during a 24-hour period. It has been consequently related to life satisfaction; morning oriented people (larks) showed higher life satisfaction than evening oriented individuals (owls).

Life satisfaction and Age

The psychologists, Yuval Palgi and Dov Shmotkin (2009), studied the old-old – people who were primarily in their nineties. This subject group was found to have thought highly of their past and present. But generally the group thought lower of their future. These people were very satisfied with their life up until the point they were surveyed but knew that the end was near and so were not quite hopeful about the future. A large factor that was talked about in life satisfaction was intelligence, wiser and knowledgeable.

Life Events and Experiences

Both Positive and negative experiences had acted as the acute events (e.g., death of a loved one) and chronic, daily experiences (e.g., ongoing family discord) influence the living condition.

In the book “Happier” by Tal Ben-Shahar, the author and also a lecturer at Harvard University argued that

- Happiness should be people’s ultimate goal and paved the way to pursue immediate joyful experience which may contribute to more long-term, meaningful satisfaction.
- Pursuing genuine self-motivated goals, rather than just instant pleasure or selflessness in service of long delayed enjoyment, results in an optimal combination of short- and long-term happiness.

Life Satisfaction and Values

- It is proposed that overall life satisfaction comes from within an individual based on the individual’s personal values and what he or she holds important. For some it is family, for others it is love, and for others it is money or other material items; either way, it varies from one person to another.
- Economic materialism can be considered a value. Previous research studies found that materialistic individuals were predominantly male, and that materialistic people also reported a lower life satisfaction level than their non-materialistic counterparts.
- The same is true of people who value money over helping other people; this is because the money they have, can buy them the assets they deem valuable.
- Materialistic people are less satisfied with life because they constantly want more and more belongings, and once those belongings are obtained they lose value, which in turn causes these people to want more belongings and the cycle continues. If these materialistic individuals do not have enough money to satisfy their craving for more items, they become more dissatisfied.
- On the contrary, if an individual does not hold the acquisition of wealth as a high priority, his or her personal financial state will not make a difference on how happy he or she is with life overall.
- Whereas few of them reported higher levels of life satisfaction wherein they valued creativity to a great extent and people who valued respect for and from others seemed to be less interested in material goods.
- Because hard times come around and often people count on their peers and family to help them through. So it is no surprise that a higher life satisfaction level was reported among people who had social support, whether it be friends, family, or church. The people who personally valued material items were found to be less satisfied overall in life as opposed to people who attached a higher amount of value with interpersonal relationships.

Religion

- Studies among aged group from 65 to 88 years have shown that highly older persons tend to increase in religiousness over the course of their lives and also had inadequate religious thoughts. Hence there is a low moderate level of positive relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction.
- Gender may also play a role in religiousness. Women tend to have greater religiosity. The basic reason may be due to biological differences or psychological role in society. Mothers are reported to have had the strongest pro-religious influence, although both parents are perceived to be an important influence in religious development of their children.
- Personal religious identity is positively associated with life satisfaction throughout the world, but the association increases in size under conditions of greater governmental regulation; and the association between participation in organized religion and life satisfaction, is attenuated as government regulation increases, and becomes negative when government regulation is high.

Culture

- Culture was significantly influenced by societal values and beliefs. Culture affects the subjective well-being. Well-being includes both general life satisfaction, and the relative balance of positive affect versus negative affect in daily life.
- Culture directs the attention to different sources of information for making the life satisfaction judgments, thus affecting subjective well-being appraisal.
- Suh et al. (1998) found that the correlation between life satisfaction and the prevalence of positive affect was higher in individualistic cultures, whereas in collectivistic cultures adhering to norms were equally important for life satisfaction.

Life Satisfaction and Family

Life satisfaction can also be looked at as a new aspect as it was influenced by a family. Family life satisfaction was a pertinent topic as everyone's family influences them in some way and most strive to have high levels of satisfaction in life as well as within their own family. As discussed by Gary L. Bowen in his article, "Family Life Satisfaction: A Value Based Approach" it examined that how family life satisfaction is enhanced by the ability of family members to jointly realize their family-related values in behavior. It is important to examine family life satisfaction from all members of the family from a "perceived" perspective and an "ideal" perspective. Greater life satisfaction within a family increases through communication and understanding each member attitudes and perceptions. A family can make all the difference for someone's life satisfaction.

In the article "Family System Characteristics, Parental Behaviors, and Adolescent Life Satisfaction" by Carolyn S. Henry, revealed that adolescent life satisfaction has much different origins than the life satisfaction of adults. An adolescent's life satisfaction is heavily influenced by his or her family's dynamic and characteristics. Family bonding, family flexibility and parental support are all huge factors into the adolescent's life satisfaction. The more bonding, flexibility and support there in the family, the higher the adolescent's life satisfaction. Results of this study also revealed that adolescents living in a single-parent family home had significantly lower life satisfaction than the adolescents in a two-parent home. An adolescent's age is extremely important in terms of life satisfaction hailing from the type of family they belonged to.

Family also relates to life satisfaction in a very different way: a woman's decision to have children or not. In the "Relationship between Information Search in the Childbearing Decision and Life Satisfaction for Parents and Nonparents" article by Carole K. Holahan, reveals that childless women have much higher life satisfaction than women with children. Women who consciously decided not to have children overall had very high life satisfaction. The study too w found that most of the life satisfaction came from careers instead of children. On the other hand, women who did have children had high life satisfaction which depended on the reasons and decision making for having children. These are just generalizations and life satisfaction comes from many different sources which are unique and different for every person. Life satisfaction can shift all of the time from events, situations, family and friend implications and many different things that all must be taken into consideration.

On the other hand, life satisfaction is also affected by parenthood and couples introducing children into their relationship. Research has shown that adults with children are less happy (McLanahan & Adams 1987) due to less life satisfaction, less marital satisfaction, more anxiety and more depression.

Life Satisfaction and Career

A satisfying career is an important component of life satisfaction. Doing something meaningful in a productive capacity contributes to one's feeling of life satisfaction. Internationally, the salary one earns is important- income levels show a moderate correlation with individual evaluations of

life satisfaction. However, in developed nations, the connection is weak and disappears for the most part when individuals earn enough money to meet basic needs (Kahneman & Deaton 2010; Diener et al 2010; Myers and Diener, 1995).

Conclusion

To sum up, the prime importance is to undergo more and more researches to provide evidence about effects of life satisfaction and well-being. However a variety of studies provide clues to the mechanisms through which life satisfaction and well-being can be achieved. Counselling processes and various methods of Psychotherapy available intends to regain the healthy life style to achieve meaningful life in the tensed world. Life satisfaction can be achieved assessing our self on the level of satisfaction along the lines of personality, age, Life events and experiences, values, religion family, culture and career particularly giving importance to our positives than the negatives and balancing our life with what we have and afforded with the god given health and wealth which will surely bring us life satisfaction and well- being.

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