

Understanding the Concepts of Subjective Well-being and Psychological Well-being

文学研究科教育学専攻博士後期課程在学

アニーシャ・ニシャート

Aneesah Nishaat

Abstract

The researcher attempted to understand the similarities and differences between subjective well-being and psychological well-being in this study. There are many studies that view subjective well-being and psychological well-being as unique concepts of well-being. On the other hand, some studies have suggested that it is wrong to view subjective well-being and psychological well-being as separate concepts. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to accurately grasp the concepts of both subjective well-being and psychological well-being through previous studies of well-being.

keywords: subjective well-being, psychological well-being, hedonic, eudemonic

Introduction

There are various researches conducted on well-being in recent times. The usage of the related terms such as subjective well-being, psychological well-being, hedonic well-being, persistent well-being, physical well-being, mental well-being, social well-being, community well-being, financial well-being, etc., has been observed.

Among these concepts, subjective well-being and psychological well-being have been much discussed. Diener (1984) promoted the concept of subjective well-being, and Ryff (1989) popularized the concept of psychological well-being in their research on human happiness. These concepts have attracted lots of researchers, and much research related to these concepts has been conducted.

In this paper, after explaining the concepts of subjective well-being and psychological well-being in detail, the researcher will try to clarify the differences and similarities in both concepts.

These concepts are explained in detail below.

Subjective Well-being

Research of subjective well-being emerged in the late 1950s (Land, 1975). After that, many scholars have taken up to explore this concept further. One of them is Diener (1984), who tried to understand and explain the evaluation of people's quality of life. Since then, there has been an increasing number of studies in the field of subjective well-being. Also, scholars have studied it from various perspectives and added many components such as life satisfaction, positive emotions, and negative emotions (Andrews & Withey, 1976), life satisfaction, and happiness as components of life quality (Bradburn, 1969).

Different researchers have different definitions and concepts of subjective well-being. Diener, Scollon, & Lucas (2009) defined subjective well-being as a branch of behavioral science that studies people's evaluations of their lives and includes concepts ranging from momentary mood to overall life satisfaction and from depression to unwarranted excessive happiness. Diener et al. (2009) presented an ordinal model of well-being (Figure 1) and showed that subjective well-being includes pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings, overall evaluation of life, and other aspects such as work, marriage, health, and leisure time as domain satisfaction.

Also, Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith (1999) noted that the structure of subjective well-being includes two domains: cognitive and affective. The cognitive dimension refers to satisfaction with life, and the affective dimension includes both positive and negative emotions such as happy and sad. Furthermore, Diener, Lucas, & Oishi (2002) state that subjective well-being is a concept that includes high positive emotions, low negative emotions, and a high level of satisfaction with life.

McGillivray & Clarke (2006) explained that "subjective well-being is a multidimensional evaluation of life that includes cognitive judgments of life satisfaction and affective evaluations of emotions and moods."

Understanding the Concepts of Subjective Well-being and Psychological Well-being

Cummins (2010) describes subjective well-being as a normal, positive state of mind that constitutes the entire life experience and is a stable sense of well-being.

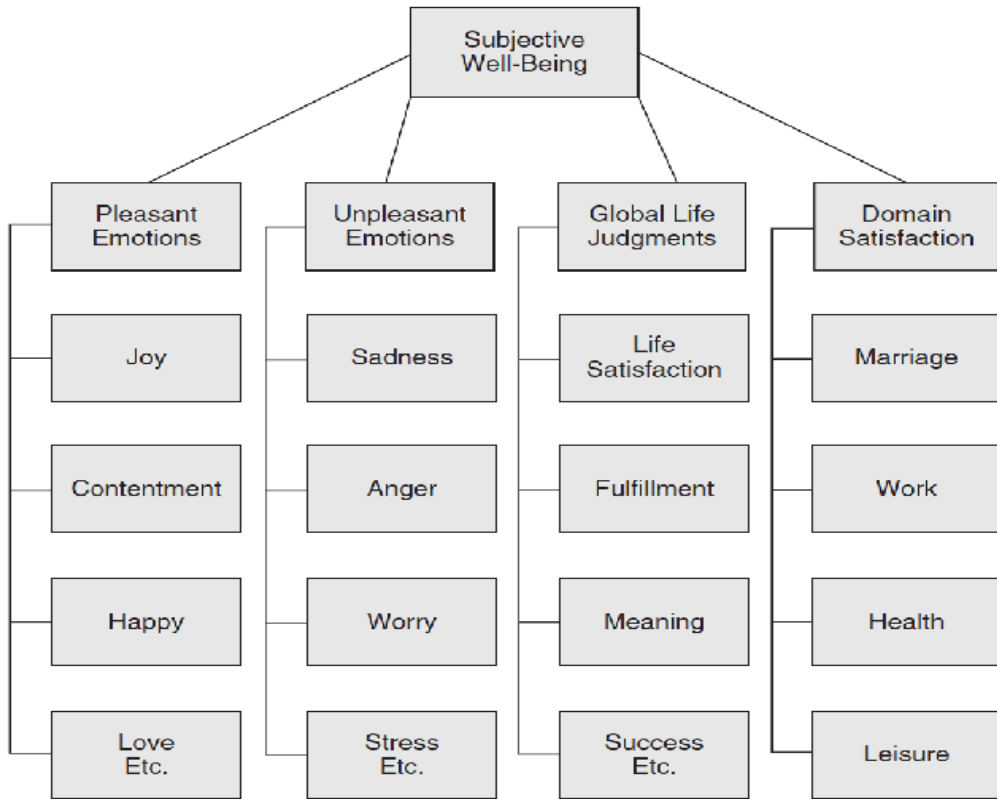


Figure 1 Hierarchical model of subjective well-being. Source: (Diener, Scollon, & Lucas, 2009, p. 71).

Psychological Well-being

Various studies have been published on psychological well-being. Currently, there is no single agreed-upon conceptual understanding of psychological well-being. However, it is accepted that psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept (Macleod & Moore, 2000).

Deci & Ryan (2008) stated that psychological well-being is conceptualized as some combination of hedonic and eudemonic perspectives. Huppert (2009, p.137) explained that psychological well-being "is about lives going well. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively."

Psychological well-being has also undergone extensive empirical review and theoretical evaluation since its beginning (Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002).

Ryff's Six Aspects of Psychological Well-being

Ryff's (1989) research changed the concept of psychological well-being from a subjective to an objective one. She included the theoretical and conceptual foundations of self-actualization (Maslow, 1968), the fully functioning human being (Rogers, 1961), individuation (Jung, 1933), maturity (Allport, 1961), basic life tendency (Buhler, 1935), personality change in adulthood and old age (Neugarten, 1973), mental health (Jahoda, 1958), personal development (Erikson, 1959), and meaning (Frankl, 1959). Ryff created six aspects from these concepts: Autonomy, Personal Growth, Environmental Mastery, Purpose in Life, Positive Relations with Others, and Self-Acceptance as components of psychological well-being.

The relationship between Ryff's (1989) concept of psychological well-being and those of researchers is depicted by Ryff & Singer (2008) in the following figure (Figure 2).

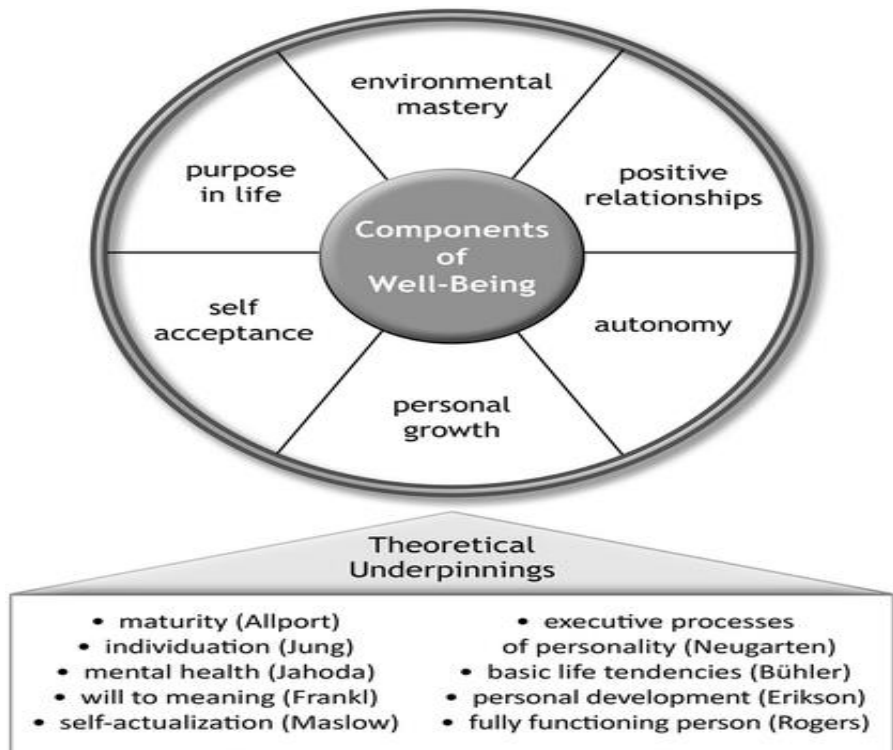


Figure 2 Core dimensions of psychological well-being and their theoretical foundations (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Understanding the Concepts of Subjective Well-being and Psychological Well-being

Autonomy

Directing one's actions by the inner locus of control is called autonomy (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Autonomous people do not seek support from others. Furthermore, they focus on their own beliefs and are less influenced by the ideas of others (Huang & Jeng, 2005).

Personal growth

To become a fully functional human being, a person needs to set and fulfill goals (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This ability to set goals and achieve them is personal growth. In order to improve one's abilities, it is necessary to make constant progress and deal with problems. Low self-improvement levels can lead to personal stagnation, no sense of extension or change over time, fatigue, and an inability to develop new mindsets and practices about existence.

Purpose in life

Purpose in life is the measure of one's existence and involves defining and achieving a goal that will enhance one's reputation forever (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Life purpose creates direction, which can eliminate discouragement.

Positive relations with others

Ryff (1989) states that having positive relationships with others is an essential part of building trust and lasting relationships. Good relationships lead to understanding others, while poor relationships can lead to frustration (Ryff, 1989). In addition, the American Psychiatric Association (2000) states that good relationships are necessary to maintain mental health.

Self-acceptance

Ryff & Keyes (1995) stated that self-acceptance plays a significant role in maintaining mental health. A healthy level of self-acceptance produces a positive attitude and increases satisfaction with life (Ryff, 1989). Self-acceptance is an essential factor for self-actualization, psychological functioning, and development (Ryff, 1989). Self-acceptance is the acceptance of the past and present and the maintenance of orientation toward the future.

Environmental mastery

Environmental mastery refers to the ability to choose and control encompassed or assumed situations through physical or mental activities. A high level of environmental mastery means that one is in control of one's situation, while a low level of environmental mastery is associated with poor control of one's environment (Ryff, 1989). Mature individuals are generally able to adapt to a variety of situations.

Relation between Subjective Well-being and Psychological Well-being

There is a long-standing debate on differences and similarities between subjective well-being and psychological well-being.

Keyes, Smothkin, & Ryff (2002) conducted research on the relation between subjective well-being and psychological well-being on 3,032 Americans. They used a single-item measure of global life satisfaction and scales of positive and negative affect related to subjective well-being and Ryff's (1989) scale of psychological well-being. They found that there are possible areas of overlap between these two concepts. Also, they pointed out that certain factors of psychological well-being (purpose in life and personal growth) and that of subjective well-being (Positive and Negative effects and Life satisfaction) are distinct from each other. So, it can be concluded that subjective well-being and psychological well-being are correlated, but both are distinct from each other as well.

Chen, Jing, Hayes, & Lee (2012), based on the conventional argument that subjective well-being and psychological well-being are the same or different from each other, conducted an analysis by using a statistical approach, the bi-factor model. The results showed that the general structure and concept of subjective well-being and psychological well-being are strongly related to each other.

Joshanloo (2016) concluded that both subjective well-being and psychological well-being are distinct and correlated at the same time. Joshanloo (2018) also conducted two studies using subjective well-being scales (life satisfaction and negative and positive affect scale) and Ryff's (1989) psychological well-being scale. His research found that emotional experiences affect

Understanding the Concepts of Subjective Well-being and Psychological Well-being

subjective well-being more, and stable skills and abilities affect psychological well-being. Also, in both of his studies, the initial levels of psychological well-being predicted positive changes in the levels of subjective well-being over time. This indicates the relationship between psychological well-being and subjective well-being and the influence of psychological well-being over subjective well-being.

Joshanloo's (2018) research suggested that between psychological and subjective well-being, psychological well-being may be more beneficial. Also, psychological well-being is more likely to increase future levels of both psychological and subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being and psychological well-being are two separate research traditions that study well-being. There are more similarities between the two than differences. They are not completely different concepts of well-being (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008).

Conclusion

Concepts of subjective well-being and psychological well-being have been used by many researchers as important well-being concepts. Many researchers have tried to find similarities as well as differences between these two concepts. These two streams of research on well-being evolved separately. However, a growing number of researches on these two concepts conclude that both are connected to each other. Subjective well-being and psychological well-being are related but distinct aspects of well-being, which as two streams of studies have characterized the well-being study as a whole. "Humanistic values that elevate the human capacity to examine what makes life good" (Keyes et al., 2002, p. 1017) are contained in both psychological well-being and subjective well-being. In the future, it will be important to explore how these two concepts influence each other.

References

- Allport, G. W. (1961). *Pattern and Growth in Personality*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Andrews, F., & Withey, S. (1976). *Social Indicators of Well-Being*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Bradburn, N. M. (1969). *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Buhler, C. (1935). The curve of life as studied in biographies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 43, 653-673.
- Chen, F. F., Jing, Y., Hayes, A., & Lee, J. M. (2012). Two Concepts or Two Approaches? A Bifactor Analysis of Psychological and Subjective Well-Being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14, 1033–1068.
- Cummins, R. (2010). Subjective wellbeing, homeostatically protected mood and depression: A Synthesis. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 11, 1-17.
- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2008). Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-Being: An Introduction. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, 9(1), 1-11.
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(3), 542-575.
- Diener, E., Lucas, R., & Oishi, S. (2002). *Subjective Well-Being: The Science of Happiness and Life Satisfaction*. Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology.
- Diener, E., Scollon, C. N., & Lucas, R. E. (2009). The evolving concept of subjective well-being: The multifaceted nature of happiness. In E. Diener (Ed.), *Assessing well-being: The collected works of Ed Diener* (pp. 67–100). Springer Science + Business Media.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(2), 276–302.
- Erikson, E.H. (1959). Identity and the life cycle: selected papers. *Psychology Issues*, 1, 1-171.
- Frankl, V.E. (1959). The spiritual dimension in existential analysis and logotherapy. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 15, 157-165.
- Huang, Y., & Jeng, J. (2005). The relationship of paternalistic leadership as well as perception of competence, autonomy, and relatedness to self-determined participation motivation in sport. *Proceedings of the 11th World Congress of Sport Psychology* (Sydney Australia).

Understanding the Concepts of Subjective Well-being and Psychological Well-being

- Huppert, F. A. (2009). Psychological well-being: Evidence regarding its causes and consequences. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 1, 137–164.
- Jahoda, M. (1958). *Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health*. New York: Basic Books.
- Joshanloo, M. (2016). Revisiting the empirical distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being using exploratory structural equation modeling. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17, 2023–2036.
- Joshanloo, M. (2018). Investigating the relationships between subjective well-being and psychological well-being over two decades. *Emotion*, 1-5.
- Jung, C.G. (1933). *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Kashdan, T.B., Biswas-Diener, R., & King, L.A. (2008) Reconsidering happiness: the costs of distinguishing between hedonics and eudaimonia, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3 (4), 219-233.
- Keyes, C. L. M., Shmotkin, D., & Ryff, C. D. (2002). Optimizing well-being: the empirical encounter of two traditions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 1007– 1022.
- Land, K. C. (1975). Social indicators models: An overview. In K. C. Land & S. Spilerman (Eds.), *Social indicator models* (pp. 5–36). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Macleod, A. K., & Moore, R. (2000). Positive thinking revisited: positive cognitions, well-being and mental health. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 7(1), 1–10.
- Maslow, A.H. (1968). *Toward a Psychology of Being* (2nd Ed.). New York: Van Nostrand.
- McGillivray, M., & Clarke, M. (2006). Human Well-being: Concepts and Measures. In M. McGillivray and M. Clarke (Eds.), *Understanding Human Well-Being* (pp. 3-15) New York: United Nations University Press.
- Neugarten, B.L. (1973). Personality change in late life: a developmental perspective. In C. Eisendorfer & M. P. Lawton (Eds.), *The Psychology of Adult Development and Aging* (pp 311-335). Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Rogers, C.R. (1961) *On becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069-1081.
- Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being

revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69 (4), 719-727.

Ryff, C.D., & Singer, B. (2008). Know thyself what you are: a eudaimonia approach to psychological well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 13-39.

Wissing, M., & Van Eeden, C. (2002). Empirical Clarification of the Nature of Psychological Well-Being. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 32, 32-44.