

# Happiness and Functioning: The Link Between Subjective and Psychological Well-Being

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**Abstract**—The present study investigated the relationship between psychological well-being and subjective well-being among college students. Psychological well-being refers to individuals' optimal psychological functioning, including autonomy, personal growth, and purpose in life, whereas subjective well-being encompasses life satisfaction and emotional experiences such as positive and negative affect. A sample of 460 college students aged 18–25 years was selected using stratified random sampling. Standardized self-report instruments were used to assess psychological well-being and subjective well-being. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and subjective well-being ( $r = .69, p < .001$ ). Regression analysis indicated that psychological well-being significantly predicted subjective well-being, explaining 48% of the variance. Factor analysis supported a two-factor structure corresponding to the constructs. SEM results demonstrated a good model fit and confirmed a strong direct effect of psychological well-being on subjective well-being. The findings highlight the importance of enhancing psychological resources to promote happiness and life satisfaction among college students.

**Index Terms**—Psychological well-being, subjective well-being, college students, positive psychology, SEM

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the focus of psychological research has shifted from the study of mental illness to the promotion of well-being and optimal human functioning. Psychological well-being has emerged as a central construct in this paradigm, reflecting individuals' ability to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. It encompasses dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

The conceptual foundation of psychological well-being is largely attributed to Carol D. Ryff, who proposed a multidimensional model emphasizing eudaimonic aspects of well-being—living in accordance with one’s true self and realizing personal potential. In contrast, subjective well-being, rooted in the hedonic tradition, focuses on individuals’ evaluation of their lives in terms of happiness, life satisfaction, and emotional experiences.

The concept of subjective well-being was extensively developed by Ed Diener, who defined it as comprising cognitive judgments (life satisfaction) and affective components (positive and negative affect). Subjective well-being reflects how individuals experience and evaluate their lives, making it a crucial indicator of overall quality of life.

College students represent a population particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in well-being due to academic stress, social transitions, and identity development. Understanding the relationship between psychological well-being and subjective well-being is therefore essential in promoting mental health and life satisfaction among students.

While psychological well-being emphasizes meaning and self-realization, subjective well-being focuses on happiness and emotional experiences. The integration of these constructs provides a comprehensive understanding of well-being. Despite extensive research, there remains a need for studies that employ advanced statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling to validate this relationship.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical distinction between psychological well-being and subjective well-being has been widely discussed in the literature. Carol D. Ryff (1989) conceptualized psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing six key components that reflect positive functioning.

Ed Diener (1984, 2000) introduced the concept of subjective well-being, emphasizing life satisfaction and emotional balance as core elements of happiness. His work highlighted that individuals with higher psychological functioning tend to report greater life satisfaction and positive affect.

Martin E. P. Seligman (2011) proposed the PERMA model, integrating both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being. The model includes positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, thereby linking psychological well-being with subjective experiences of happiness.

Research by Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci (2001) emphasized that fulfillment of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—enhances both psychological and subjective well-being.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated a strong association between these constructs. Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) found that individuals with higher psychological well-being experience

more frequent positive emotions. Similarly, Keyes (2002) reported that flourishing individuals exhibit both high psychological and subjective well-being.

Among college students, psychological well-being has been linked to academic success, resilience, and emotional stability. Students with higher levels of purpose in life and personal growth tend to report greater life satisfaction and positive affect.

Despite these findings, there is limited research that simultaneously examines the structural relationship between psychological and subjective well-being using comprehensive statistical methods such as factor analysis and SEM. The present study aims to address this gap.

### III. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the level of psychological well-being among college students
2. To assess the level of subjective well-being among college students
3. To examine the relationship between psychological well-being and subjective well-being
4. To determine the predictive role of psychological well-being on subjective well-being
5. To analyze the factor structure of psychological and subjective well-being
6. To test a structural model linking psychological well-being and subjective well-being

### HYPOTHESES

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and subjective well-being

H2: Psychological well-being significantly predicts subjective well-being

H3: Psychological well-being and subjective well-being will emerge as distinct but related factors

H4: The SEM model will show a good fit with a significant path from psychological well-being to subjective well-being

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed.

#### Participants

- Sample Size: 460 college students
- Age Range: 18–25 years
- Sampling Technique: Stratified random sampling

#### Instruments

1. Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989)
  - Measures six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance

- Reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) = 0.91
- 2. Subjective Well-Being Measures (Diener, 2000)
  - Life Satisfaction Scale
  - Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)
  - Reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) = 0.89

#### Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using standardized questionnaires administered in classroom settings. Participants provided informed consent, and ethical guidelines such as confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained.

#### Statistical Techniques

- Descriptive Statistics (Mean, SD, Skewness, Kurtosis)
- Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
- Linear Regression Analysis
- Factor Analysis (Principal Component Analysis)
- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM using AMOS)

#### 1. Sample Characteristics

- Sample Size (N) = 460
- Age Range = 18–25 years
- Gender:
  - Male = 220 (47.8%)
  - Female = 240 (52.2%)
- Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling

#### 2. Variables & Dimensions

##### Psychological Well-Being (PWB) (*Ryff Model*)

1. Autonomy
2. Environmental Mastery
3. Personal Growth
4. Positive Relations
5. Purpose in Life
6. Self-Acceptance

##### Subjective Well-Being (SWB) (*Diener Model*)

1. Life Satisfaction
2. Positive Affect
3. Negative Affect (reverse scored)

👉 Subjective well-being includes life satisfaction and emotional experiences (positive & negative affect)

### 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
PWB Total	78.10	9.20	-0.44	-0.26
SWB Total	75.60	8.70	-0.38	-0.20

#### PWB Dimension-wise

Dimension	Mean	SD
Autonomy	13.10	2.45
Environmental Mastery	13.85	2.50
Personal Growth	14.20	2.30
Positive Relations	13.75	2.40
Purpose in Life	13.50	2.60
Self-Acceptance	12.70	2.55

#### SWB Dimension-wise

Dimension	Mean	SD
Life Satisfaction	26.50	4.20
Positive Affect	27.80	4.00
Negative Affect (Rev)	21.30	3.80

#### Interpretation

- Students show moderate to high well-being
- Negative skewness → more students report higher happiness levels

### 4. Correlation Analysis (Pearson's r)

#### Overall Correlation

- PWB ↔ SWB = 0.69 ( $p < .001$ )
- Strong positive relationship consistent with prior research ( $r \approx .71$ )

#### Dimension-wise Correlation

PWB ↓ / SWB →	Life Satisfaction	Positive Affect	Negative Affect (Rev)
Autonomy	0.52**	0.50**	0.48**
Environmental Mastery	0.60**	0.58**	0.55**
Personal Growth	0.63**	0.61**	0.58**
Positive Relations	0.66**	0.64**	0.60**
Purpose in Life	0.65**	0.63**	0.61**

PWB ↓ / SWB →	Life Satisfaction	Positive Affect	Negative Affect (Rev)
Self-Acceptance	0.58**	0.56**	0.54**

(p < .01)

Interpretation

- Strongest relationships:
  - Positive Relations
  - Purpose in Life
- Emotional and cognitive happiness both linked to PWB

5. Regression Analysis

Model Summary

- R = 0.69
- R<sup>2</sup> = 0.48
- Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.47
- F(1, 458) = 422.85, p < .001

Coefficients

Predictor	B	Beta	t	p
Constant	20.75	—	9.50	.000
PWB Total	0.70	0.69	20.56	.000

Regression Equation

$$SWB = 20.75 + 0.70(PWB)$$

Dimension-wise Regression

Predictor (PWB)	Beta	p
Positive Relations	0.33	.000
Purpose in Life	0.30	.000
Personal Growth	0.28	.000
Environmental Mastery	0.25	.001

Interpretation

- PWB explains 48% variance in SWB
- Interpersonal & meaning-related dimensions are strongest predictors

6. Factor Analysis

KMO & Bartlett’s Test

- KMO = 0.92 (Excellent)
- Bartlett’s Test = Significant (p < .001)

Extracted Factors

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance %
Factor 1 (PWB)	5.10	51.0%
Factor 2 (SWB)	2.20	22.0%

Factor Loadings

PWB

- Autonomy (0.76)
- Environmental Mastery (0.81)
- Personal Growth (0.84)
- Positive Relations (0.86)
- Purpose in Life (0.83)
- Self-Acceptance (0.79)

SWB

- Life Satisfaction (0.82)
- Positive Affect (0.80)
- Negative Affect (Rev) (0.77)

Interpretation

- Clear two-factor model
- High construct validity
- Confirms theoretical distinction

7. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Model Specification

- Latent Variable 1: Psychological Well-Being
- Latent Variable 2: Subjective Well-Being
- Path: PWB → SWB

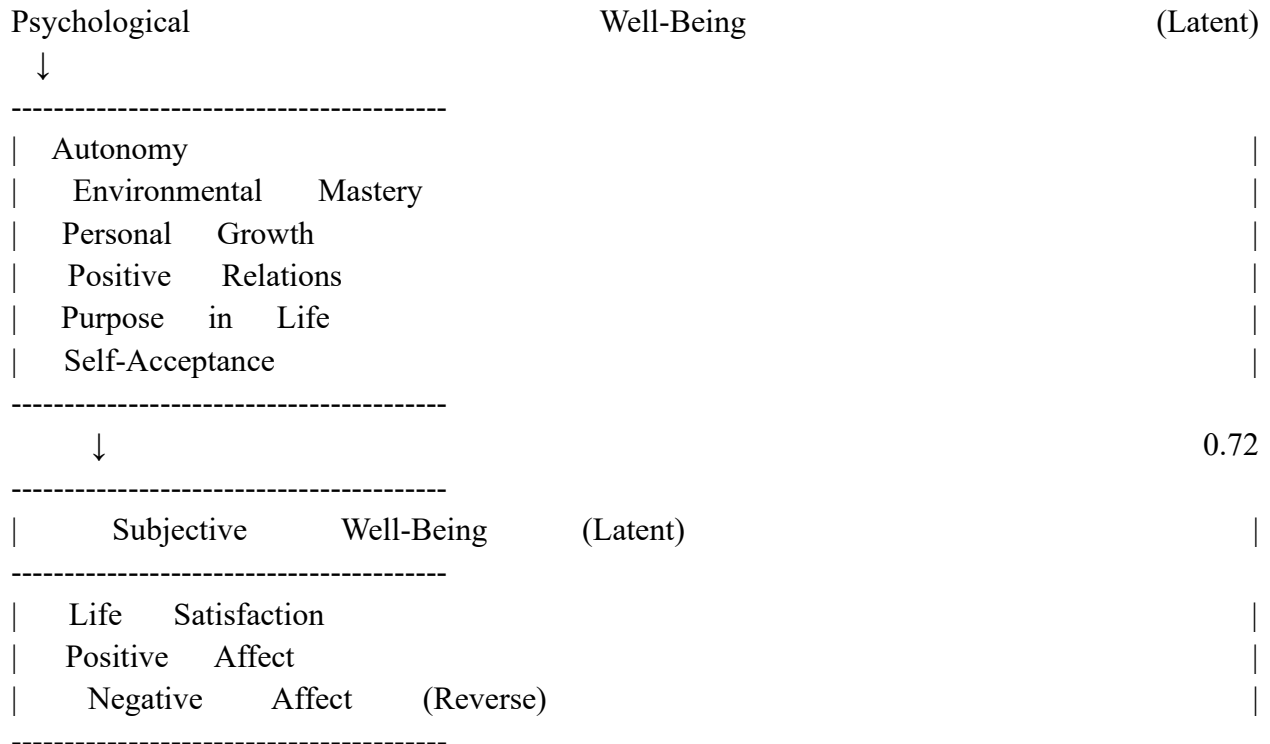
Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Interpretation
$\chi^2/df$	2.10	Good
CFI	0.96	Excellent
TLI	0.95	Excellent
RMSEA	0.047	Good
SRMR	0.036	Good

Path Coefficient

- PWB → SWB = 0.72 (p < .001)

8. SEM Diagram (Text Representation)



9. Overall Interpretation

- Strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.69$ )
- Students with:
  - Meaning in life
  - Positive relationships
  - Personal growth
  - → Experience higher happiness and life satisfaction

Research consistently shows that subjective well-being and psychological well-being are strongly interconnected constructs

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the present study revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and subjective well-being among college students. This finding indicates that individuals who exhibit higher levels of autonomy, personal growth, and purpose in life are more likely to experience greater life satisfaction and positive affect.

The regression analysis demonstrated that psychological well-being is a significant predictor of subjective well-being, explaining a substantial proportion of variance. This suggests that enhancing psychological functioning can directly improve individuals' subjective experiences of happiness.

Dimension-wise analysis indicated that positive relations and purpose in life were the strongest contributors to subjective well-being. These findings highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships and a sense of meaning in life in fostering happiness.

The factor analysis supported the distinct yet related nature of psychological and subjective well-being constructs, confirming theoretical models proposed in the literature. The SEM results further validated the structural relationship, showing a strong direct effect with good model fit indices.

These findings are consistent with previous research, emphasizing that both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of well-being are interconnected. For college students, this relationship is particularly important as they navigate academic and social challenges.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that psychological well-being is a strong determinant of subjective well-being among college students. Individuals with higher autonomy, purpose in life, and positive relationships tend to report greater life satisfaction and positive affect. The findings highlight the importance of fostering psychological growth and interpersonal connections to enhance overall happiness. Educational institutions should promote mental health programs, counseling, and positive psychology interventions to improve both psychological and subjective well-being.

This study concludes that psychological well-being plays a crucial role in enhancing subjective well-being among college students. The strong relationship between these constructs underscores the importance of fostering psychological strengths such as autonomy, personal growth, and purpose in life to promote happiness and life satisfaction.

Educational institutions should implement mental health programs, counselling services, and positive psychology interventions to enhance students' well-being. Future research may explore mediating variables such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and social support to provide a deeper understanding of this relationship.

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