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M. Joseph Sirgy

The Psychology of Quality of Life

Hedonic Well-Being, Life Satisfaction, and Eudaimonia

Second Edition

Springer

The Psychology of Quality of Life

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This book is dedicated to all quality-of-life researchers worldwide.

Preface

In 2002, I wrote *The Psychology of Quality of Life* that was published by Kluwer Academic Publishers. The current book is an attempt to update the first edition that was published in 2002. The amount of research in quality of life (QOL) over the last decade has been enormous. Therefore, this second edition of the book is essentially a major overhaul of the book. I tried to incorporate much of the recent research in this area in this new edition. The references section at the end of the book is "huge," a testimony of the amount of the research on subjective well-being that was published during the last decade.

The second edition is divided into six major parts. Part I is essentially the introduction. This part has three chapters. Chapter 1 lays the philosophical foundation of much of the research in the subjective aspects of QOL in terms of three major constructs: hedonic well-being, life satisfaction, and eudaimonia. Although throughout the book I tried to be as specific as possible in the way QOL researchers use the concepts of *hedonic well-being* (other interchangeable terms and concepts include emotional well-being, happiness, the affective component of subjective well-being, positive and negative affect, etc.)*, life satisfaction* (QOL researchers refer to this concept as the cognitive component of subjective well-being), and *eudaimonia* (QOL researchers use terms such as psychological well-being, self-actualization, self-realization, individual growth, self-development, mental health, flourishing, etc.), I sometimes used the term *subjective QOL, subjective well-being,* or *happiness* as a "catch-all" concept. In other words, in the absence of specificity, I made reference to subjective well-being or the subjective aspects of QOL. In Chap. 2, I covered much of the research that deals with major distinctions among subjective well-being constructs. In Chap. 3, I made a case for the importance of the research in the psychology of QOL. I discuss much of the research showing the beneficial effects of happy people at work, to health, and to society at large.

Part II of the book focuses on research dealing with objective reality. That is, I described research showing how sociocultural factors (Chap. 4); income factors (Chap. 5); other demographic factors such as age, gender, and education (Chap. 6); personal activities (Chap. 7); and biological and health conditions (Chap. 8) affect

subjective well-being. These conditions essentially reflect the actual internal and the external physical environment that an individual finds oneself in. This objective reality impinges on his subjective well-being.

Part III of the book focuses on subjective reality. Objective reality ultimately translates into subjective reality, and in this context, the individual transforms information from "objective reality" into "subjective reality," which in turn influences the individual's sense of well-being. Subjective reality can be in the form of personality (Chap. 9), affect and cognition (Chap. 10), beliefs and values (Chap. 11), needs and need satisfaction (Chap. 12), goals (Chap. 13), self-concept (Chap. 14), and social comparisons (Chap. 15). We discussed not only how the individual processes information from the objective environment but also how he or she manipulates this information that ultimately puts a dent into his or her subjective well-being.

Part IV focuses on the psychology of well-being that is specific to life domains. In this context, I began this part of the book with a chapter dealing with domain dynamics (Chap. 16). This chapter covered much of the theories explaining how domain satisfaction plays a role in subjective well-being. Then I described much of the research in relation to work well-being (Chap. 17), residential well-being (Chap. 18), material well-being (Chap. 19), social/family/marital well-being (Chap. 20), health well-being (Chap. 21), leisure well-being (Chap. 22), and well-being in other less salient life domains such as spiritual well-being, political well-being, educational well-being, and environmental well-being (Chap. 23).

In Part V of the book, I reviewed much of the research on special populations. Specifically, Chap. 24 focuses on the psychology of QOL in relation to children, youth, and college students. Chapter 25 focuses on the well-being of the elderly; Chap. 26, on well-being issues of women; Chap. 27, the well-being of entire countries; and Chap. 28 covers a potpourri of other population groups such as the disabled, drug addicts, prostitutes, emergency personnel, immigrants, teachers, and caregivers.

The final part of the book (Part VI) has two chapters. Chapter 29 focuses on theories and models of subjective well-being that attempt to integrate and unify disparate concepts and programs of research in subjective well-being. In the final chapter (Chap. 30), I offered my concluding thoughts by addressing the importance of the psychology of QOL in the context of public policy. That is, I echoed the overall sentiment by the vast majority of QOL researchers that public policy should be, at least in part, guided by happiness research. But also I warned the reader that happiness research is not enough. The call to action is to broaden our approach in happiness research to incorporate other aspects of QOL research at higher levels of analysis (i.e., the group level, the community level, the societal level).

This book contains much rich information about the psychology of QOL (hedonic well-being, life satisfaction, and eudaimonia). I hope that readers of this book will find this book helpful to their own understanding of QOL issues and most importantly in guiding their own research agenda in subjective well-being.

Happy reading,
Joe Sirgy

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Author Biography

M. Joseph Sirgy is a management psychologist (Ph.D., U/Massachusetts, 1979), professor of marketing, and Virginia real estate research fellow at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). He has published extensively in the area of consumer behavior, marketing/quality-of-life, and business ethics. He is the author/editor of many books related to consumer behavior, marketing communications, marketing and society, and quality of life. He cofounded the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) in 1995, served as its Executive Director/Treasurer from 1995 to 2011 and as development director (2011–2012). In 1998, he received the Distinguished Fellow Award from ISQOLS. In 2003, ISQOLS honored him as the Distinguished QOL Researcher for research excellence and a record of lifetime achievement in QOL research. He also served as president of the Academy of Marketing Science from which he received the Distinguished Fellow Award in the early 1990s and the Harold Berkman Service Award in 2007 (lifetime achievement award for serving the marketing professoriate). In the early 2000s, he helped cofound the Macromarketing Society and the Community Indicators Consortium and has served as a board member of these two professional associations. Furthermore, he has served as editor of the QOL section in the *Journal of Macromarketing* and the editor-in-chief of *Applied Research in Quality of Life*. He received the Virginia Tech's Pamplin Teaching Excellence Award/Holtzman Outstanding Educator Award and University Certificate of Teaching Excellence in 2008. In 2010, ISQOLS honored him for excellence and lifetime service to the society. Also, in 2010, he won the Best Paper Award in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* for his theory on the balanced life, and in 2011, he won the Best Paper Award in the *Journal of Travel Research* for his theory of goal theory of leisure travel satisfaction and QOL.

Part I
Introduction

This part of the book comprises three chapters. The first chapter introduces the reader to the concepts of subjective aspects of quality of life (QOL). There is a plethora of concepts directly related to subjective well-being: life satisfaction, domain satisfaction, positive/negative affect, emotional well-being, hedonic well-being, subjective well-being, perceived QOL, happiness, psychological well-being, eudaimonia, authentic happiness, flourishing, positive mental health, psychological happiness, prudential happiness, perfectionist happiness, the good life, among others. The reader is exposed to what the philosophers of happiness have to say about the proliferation of these concepts and their meaning. In essence, philosophers seem to agree that these concepts of subjective aspects of QOL or happiness can be captured using three major concepts: psychological happiness, prudential happiness, and perfectionist happiness. I will show that these three philosophical concepts of happiness do indeed capture the majority of these subjective concepts. *Psychological happiness* seems to capture affective-related concepts of well-being such as hedonic well-being, emotional well-being, and positive/negative affect. *Prudential happiness* is a more macrolevel concept. It incorporates a variety of well-being concepts such as life satisfaction, perceived QOL, domain satisfaction, and subjective well-being. Finally, *perfectionist happiness* is a more macrolevel concept that seems to capture concepts such as eudaimonia, flourishing, positive mental health, psychological well-being, and personal development. It seems to me that these three major concepts of subjective aspects of well-being reflect a certain level of symmetry or correspondence to Martin Seligman's (2002, 2011) concepts of the *pleasant life* (i.e., psychological happiness), the *engaged life* (i.e., prudential happiness), and the *meaningful life* (i.e., perfectionist happiness). I will discuss this symmetry in the conclusion section of Chap. 1. Also, in describing the major concepts of subjective aspects of QOL, I will expose the reader to examples of measures that have gained a certain level of popularity in the QOL research literature.

Chapter 2 addresses many distinctions made differentiating concepts of subjective aspects of QOL. Many of these distinctions have been made by QOL scholars and supported by empirical evidence. The chapter begins by addressing the distinction between subjective and objective indicators of QOL. The evidence shows that these

two sets of indicators are not highly correlated, which provides ammunition to the argument that both sets of indicators are necessary to paint a complete picture of QOL in relation to a particular population segment. Another distinction is between inputs and outcomes of well-being. Empirical research shows that these are interrelated in a hierarchical fashion. That is, input indicators of well-being can be construed as lower-level goals in a goal hierarchy, whereas outcome indicators as higher-level goals. Furthermore, inner versus outer indicators of well-being are distinguished from one another. Inner goals are within the individual, whereas outer goals are related to the environment. Research has also shown that the construct of happiness is distinctly different from life satisfaction. The measurement of happiness seems to be more affective, whereas the measurement of life satisfaction is more cognitive. As such, empirical evidence has shown that the determinants of happiness are not the same determinants of life satisfaction. We then turn to the concept of subjective well-being and show the reader how it has been treated as an umbrella concept to cover both cognitive and affective dimensions of well-being. In that vein, I make an attempt to help the reader develop an appreciation of the concept of subjective well-being by showing how it can serve as an integrative framework involving three major dimensions: (1) cognitive versus affective concepts of well-being, (2) concepts of well-being that focus on positive versus negative aspects of well-being, and (3) short-term versus long-term concepts of well-being. I then conclude the chapter by discussing the emergent concepts of eudaimonia and psychological well-being—they are emergent from the concept of subjective well-being. In other words, I argue based on the research literature that eudaimonia and psychological well-being go above and beyond our traditional and early notion of subjective well-being. The eudaimonia concepts of well-being reflect a long-term perspective of well-being that focuses not only on subjective well-being (in the traditional sense) but also on personal and moral development.

Chapter 3 focuses on reviewing the QOL research literature on the effects of QOL concepts such as hedonic well-being, life satisfaction, and eudaimonia on a variety of personal, social, organizational, and societal outcomes: health; achievement and work; and social relationships, prosocial behavior, trust, and future happiness. This is very important because this discussion is designed to help the reader understand the growing importance of the psychology of QOL. The consequences of QOL are far reaching; they impact not only people's lives but also society at large. The main argument is that the understanding of the psychology of QOL should help public policy officials and decision makers in both the private and public sectors make better decisions, more effective decisions, the kind of decisions that could enhance societal outcomes. The take-away message is that the study of the psychology of QOL is far more important than initially recognized. Embracing the science of QOL should help policy makers make better decisions in many areas of endeavor across many basic science disciplines (economics, psychology, sociology, biology, etc.) and the applied sciences (public policy, public administration, political science, management, marketing, accounting, applied psychology, applied sociology, social work, hospitality and tourism management, leisure studies, sports and recreation, health and medicine, urban planning and architecture, communication studies, wildlife

management, education, etc.). I end this chapter by discussing the research concerning the level of happiness that is optimal. In other words, the research I review attempts to answer the question: Are people who are happiest experience higher levels of well-being compared to people who are moderately happy and least happy? The reason why this question is being addressed is because there seems to be a hint of evidence suggesting that moderately happy people are likely to experience higher levels of motivation to achieve than the most happy. If so, interventions and programs should be designed to enhance happiness but up to an optimal point. Read the chapter.

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Chapter 1
Philosophical Foundations, Definitions, and Measures

In this chapter, I will make an attempt to sensitize the reader to the study of subjective aspects of quality of life (QOL) by addressing the philosophical foundations of QOL concepts such as happiness, positive and negative affect, emotional well-being, life satisfaction, subjective well-being, perceived QOL, psychological well-being, and eudaimonia. In doing so, definitions will be offered. I hope that these definitions will come to life when I describe example measures of these concepts.

1 Happiness Is Both a Philosophical and Psychological Concept

Jeremy Bentham (1789/1969), the founder of the moral philosophy of utilitarianism, viewed happiness as a consequence of choice among alternative courses of action. His famous moral dictum of *choosing the action that leads to the greatest happiness of the greatest number* illustrates his view of happiness. Happiness is a state of being that people experience as a result of action by oneself or others. Russell (1930/1975), another utilitarian philosopher and ethicist, asserted that people who experience pleasure from seeing others being happy become happy too.

It is important to note that many philosophers have addressed the issue of happiness. Happiness to most philosophers is not simply a psychological matter; it is an evaluative matter. It concerns the conditions of leading a good and moral life. Therefore, it is not a psychological phenomenon but a phenomenon of ethics (Haybron, 2000). Happiness to philosophers such as Aristotle and Thomas Jefferson requires more than a state of mind. People can be deluded to be happy by religion. Many religions promise happiness in the here and now as well as in the "afterlife." Do people who "discover" religion find true happiness? A man lives in dire poverty and in wretched material conditions may find solace in religion. Is this man happy? Not according to some philosophers. For example, Aristotle viewed happiness as

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living in a manner that actively expresses excellence of character or virtue (Aristotle, 1962/1986). Thus, one can be happy by expressing excellence of character (the essence of the good and moral life), not by being cheerful and serene (feeling happy).

2 Happiness as a Strong and Universal Motive

Philosophers have long addressed this question. The consensus seems to be that happiness is a universal motive that guides much of human behavior. In the words of one philosopher:

> All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions. However, different the means they may employ, they all strive towards this goal. The reason why some go to war and some do not is the same desire in both, but interpreted in two different ways. They will never take the least step except to that end. This is the motive of every act of every man, including those who go and hang themselves (Pascal, 1995, p. 45; originally published in 1669).

William James, the father of modern psychology, once said:

> How to keep, how to gain, how to recover happiness is … for most men at all times the secret motive for all they do (James, 1902, p. 76).

Empirically speaking, surveys have documented the importance of happiness as a strong and universal motive relative to other motives. Consider the following studies by Ed Diener (the founder of the subjective well-being research movement) and his colleagues. Diener, Sapyta, and Suh (1998) conducted a study that surveyed college students in 41 countries in which one of the survey items instructed respondents to rate the importance of happiness as a goal in life on a 7-point scale where 7 reflects "extraordinarily important and valuable." The average rating was 6.39, indicating that happiness is extremely important as a life goal. Another study by Diener and Oishi (2004) found that "being happy" is considered to be more important than having a good health, a high income, being attractive, and even more important than experiencing love and finding meaning and purpose in life. Furthermore, Diener and Oishi (2006) conducted a large international survey involving 10,000 respondents from 48 nations and found that happiness is rated very important in comparison to other desired end states such as success, intelligence/knowledge, and material wealth.

Yet another study focusing on the American public, King and Napa (1998) reported that Americans consider happiness in their judgment of what is a good life to be more relevant than wealth and moral goodness.

3 Bentham Versus Aristotle

QOL researchers have long argued that QOL can be construed *a la* Bentham or *a la* Aristotle (e.g., Graham, 2011). QOL in the Benthamite tradition is essentially *contentment*, whereas QOL in the Aristotelian sense is a *meaningful and fulfilling life*.