

Dark Side of Happiness: A Review of Subjective Wellbeing & Happiness

Shurly Tiwari

Asst.Prof, International School of management excellence

Happiness and wellbeing are not a place where someone can reach but wellbeing can lead you to happiness and happiness can lead you to satisfaction and satisfaction leads to peace.

(Shrimad- Bhagwat Gita).

Abstract:

This paper is an effort to understand the difference between Subjective well-being and happiness. SWB and happiness are important topics from the point of view of research, both of them can be used in the organisations as it helps in development of employees and employee related policies. Previously happiness was considered an abstract entity and there was a lot of emphasis on the wellbeing of the employees. But in recent studies emphasise the effect of happy employees on business. This research conducted a thematic analysis on the past researches conducted, and tried to infer a logical difference between happiness and SWB. This research also emphasises on the dark side of happiness, which will help the organisations to keep a track on the happiness levels of the employees. The research will help to identify the difference between happiness and SWB and the dark side of happiness which will help the organisations to reframe few of their policies and procedures for the employees. This research when studied further can also help in developing new models for increasing the happiness of employees which will affect the productivity of employees and eventually the profits.

Keywords: Happiness, SWB, Dark side of happiness.

Introduction:

Many researchers have tried to explain happiness and subjective wellbeing in different ways. The dictionary defines happiness as: "the quality or state of being happy". Whilst wellbeing is defined as: "a satisfactory condition of existence; a state characterised by health, happiness, and prosperity; welfare".

Pursuing happiness can result in a paradoxical outcome, Kesebir, and Diener (2008). Research states that pursuing happiness is absurd and creates pressure on the individual, resulting in a more challenging situation than normal.

Ekman, 1992; Levenson, 2003; Plutchik, 1980, gave the physiological perspective of happiness and consider happiness as an emotion and every emotion causes a specific stimulus in the human body. If the emotions go out of control, they can cause problems.

Researchers try to put value to happiness by calculating it through wellbeing. This value consists of the benefits that one person received in life and the things that he could not achieve or attain. This might include things beyond happiness, such as achievement or friendship. Some other meaning for well-being includes 'flourishing', 'thriving' and 'welfare'. In Greek language wellbeing is known as '*Eudaimonia*'.

Confusion occurs from the fact that many scholars, especially in philosophy and theology, use the word 'happiness' as a synonym for 'well-being'. Whereas, in sciences happiness takes a psychological meaning. Carver and Scheier's (1981) found out that happy emotion not always help in achieving the goals.

Literature Review

Till 1930 only Greek philosophies were considered true for understanding the concept of Happiness. After thirty years, Wilson,(1967) defined happiness as "prompt satisfaction of needs causes happiness". Diener, (1984) placed greater emphasis on psychological factors which define SWB and happiness.

Wilson, (1967) defined happy person as "Young, healthy, well educated, well paid, extrovert, optimistic, worry-free, religious, married person with high self-esteem, job satisfaction, modest aspiration, of either sex and of a wide range of intelligence" but most of his theories are over turned. Shin and Johnson (1978) have defined this form of happiness as "a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his own chosen criteria". A related set of definitions of happiness is that it is the harmonious satisfaction of one's desires and goals. Chekola (1975). These definitions tried to bring the concepts of happiness and SWB together.

Dinnan et al., (1994) searched for the psychological levels for happiness and SWB, and observed that among human beings "Cortisol levels" decides the wellbeing and ill-being of any person.

Tellegen et al., (1999), identified the role of genetics in the happiness of any person and declared that happiness is trait of SWB. In the reanalysis of this study. Lykken & Tellegen,(1996) calculated that 40% to 55% of variation in SWB is explained by genes. 80% of SWB is heritable. Campbell et al., 1976 found that 20% of SWB in a person is defined by the demographic factors and 15% of SWB by its external factors (Argyl,1976). Marcus Aurelius wrote that "no man is happy who does not think himself so."

Veenhoven,(2012), declared that happiness and SWB are same. He also stated that happiness can change over time and it fluctuates over time. It was found that personality has a direct link with SWB and extrovert personalities are found to be happier than the introvert personalities. However Diener & Seligman, (2002) stable personalities have both trait like and state like properties which also affects the SWB

Satisfaction with life and positive affect are both studied by subjective well-being researchers. The components of happiness and SWB are self-esteem and life satisfaction (Kwan et al.,1997),Optimism(Scheier & Carver,1985), life events has direct effect on SWB (Heady 1989 & Pevot 1993).pleasant effect and unpleasant affect(Bradburn & Caplovitz,1965) like joy , elation, contentment , pride, affection, happiness and ecstasy will come under pleasant affect .whereas guilt, shame, sadness, anxiety and worry, anger , stress, depression and envy will come under unpleasant affects. These affects will lead to different forms of life satisfactions and domain satisfaction. (Côté & Hall, 1995), explained the relationship between assertiveness and SWB and stated that assertiveness has a direct positive relation with SWB. Lyubomirsky, (1997) identified that happy people compare themselves downward and upward. Martin, (1992) explains that people with high aspiration and low outcomes have low SWB

SWB is defined by several researchers as virtue of holiness. Coan (1977) stated that ideal conditions for people change with culture and eras. SWB is defined by an individual's satisfaction, it depends on the standards of the respondents to determine good life. Campbell, (1976) states that SWB has three benchmarks first it is subjective, it resides within the experience of an individual. Definition of SWB does not always have objective conditions such as health, comfort, virtue, or wealth (Kammann &

Flett, 1983) although all these conditions have influence on SWB. Second benchmark for SWB includes positive measures, but it is not merely the absence of negative measures, but it also includes the mental health or mental wellbeing of an individual (Diener, 1994). Third benchmark of SWB is global assessment of all aspects of a person's life. Although affect or satisfaction within a certain domain may be assessed, the emphasis is usually placed on an integrated judgment of the person's life.

In addition, SWB researchers believe that social indicators alone define quality of life (Diener et al., 1999). However few people would argue that SWB is the only ingredient of a good life (Diener, Sapatya & Suh, 1998). Kahneman (1991) argued that experience happiness should be the primary method of measuring SWB. But this genetic effect may or may not be direct as they can directly or indirectly effect the behaviour (Plomin & Nesselroade, 1990).

Researchers have found out several other factors which can influence or effect SWB and happiness like Goals, adaptation and coping, health, income, religion, marriage, age, job moral and education. Grassman, (1998) explained that not all goals are equal in terms of producing high SWB. Kasser & Ryan, (1993) identified that those who rate financial success as more important than self-acceptance or affiliation goals have lower wellbeing. Furthermore, (Emmons & King, 1988) found that happy people's aspirations are more coherently organised with each other than those who are less happy. Similarly, the effects of health and wealth are subsequently measured on SWB and happiness and it was found that health has more effect on the wellbeing of a person than wealth (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). Researchers have also tried to identify the effect of marriage and religion and the findings state that married people are happier compared to singles.

Martin Seligman (2011) gave a model of happiness known as PERMA model, this model explains the elements of happiness. PERMA is the acronym for building blocks of wellbeing and happiness.

These elements are Positive emotion, Engagement, Relations, Meaning and Achievement. Additionally, Seligman indicates that each element of well-being and happiness has to have three characteristics itself, namely. Every element has to contribute to well-being and happiness. All elements are equally important. Every element has to be determined and measured independently from the other elements. This model helps an individual to understand

the meaning of happiness and wellbeing. It creates awareness among employees, helping them to manage these elements for being happier.

Happiness and SWB is been the point of curiosity for many researchers. A few researchers believe that happiness, SWB and life satisfaction are same and have similar constructs (Veenhoven et al., 2012). Happiness is decided by the quality of life. It is defined by the four qualities of life and the qualities are life chances, life results, inner and outer qualities (Gerson, 1976). Combination of life chances and outer quality decide the liveability of environment. Liveability means good living conditions, Ecologists see liveability in the natural environment and describe it in terms of pollution, global warming and degradation of nature and City planners see liveability in the built environment and associate it with such things as sewer systems, traffic jams and ghetto formation. Liveability is not the happiness but a precondition and prediction for happiness. On the other hand the combination of life chances and inner qualities causes life ability of a person, which means how an individual is prepared to cope with the problems of life and to fight back this is also denoted by the term self-actualisation (accumulation of new skills) this also refers to the ability of a person to enjoy life. On the other hand, the combination of life results and outer qualities causes utility of life, which means the understanding of true significance of life for an individual and finally the combination of life results and inner qualities creates satisfaction with life (Sen, 1992). Thus happiness, life satisfaction and SBW are synonymous with each other.

Most of the researchers and studies identify satisfaction with whole life. There are four kinds of life satisfactions they are Instant satisfaction, Domain satisfaction, top experience and overall pleasure or happiness. Satisfaction can be passing and also can be an entire life process. Instant achievements give a feeling of instant satisfaction whereas achievements in the respective domain gives a domain satisfaction which becomes the base of life satisfaction. Satisfaction is a combination of hedonic as well as eudemonic happiness. Satisfaction in life starts with hedonic pleasures and end with eudemonic satisfaction. Thus, happiness and satisfaction are same.

Basically, there are three basic parameters of happiness and they are Genes (50%), Life choices (40%) and life circumstances and behaviour (10%) (Lyubomirsky, 1997). Though there is a hedonic adaptation in an individual meaning that an individual gets happy when he achieves his goals, like a good car, a house, salary raise etc. but this all fades away with time. Happiness is more long lasting

and more effective and it can be exercised by taking a control of your life choices, by counting the things you have, gratitude etc

Different definitions given by different researchers are as follows.

Happiness	Well being
The term happiness is used in the context of mental or emotional states, including positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. (Ann Wilkinson et al., 2018)	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 ability to manage stress. More generally, well-being is just feeling well. (Tchiki Davis, 2019)
The current experience of the feeling of an emotion such as pleasure or joy, or of a more general sense of emotional condition as a whole. (Bowling, 2015)	Wellness refers to diverse and interconnected dimensions of physical, mental, and social well-being that extend beyond the traditional definition of health. (Naci & Ioannidis, 2015)
Happiness include measures of subjective wellbeing, mood and eudaimonia. (Landes, 2016)	Simple positive activities increase wellbeing. The experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile. (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013)
"Reconsidering happiness: The costs of distinguishing between hedonics and eudaimonia". (Kashdan et al., 2008)	Three distinct but often related components of wellbeing: frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and cognitive evaluations such as life satisfaction. (Diener, 1984)
Overall happiness is the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his/her own life-as-a-whole favourably. In	

other words: how much one likes the life one leads. Veenhoven (1984:22-25).	
---	--

Dark side of Happiness

Cacioppo et al., (1993) states that negative emotions are not always bad and there is no need to get away from them for eg. Fear increases individual's judgment skills and help to make better decisions to deal with the threat.

Disadvantages of being too happy:

1. Payless attention to details

Schnall, Jaswal, & Rowe (2008), experimented on kids ages 6 to 7 and 10 to 11 found that extreme happiness may have negative effects on a child's performance, specifically with detail-oriented tasks.

2. Less creative

Fredrickson (2004), stated that positive emotions are likely to promote creative and innovative ideas). But medically it is proven that when humans are extremely happy, there brain focuses more on happiness rather than solving the problem, which limits the creativity of the individual. (O'Faolan, 2016).

3. Take more risks

Gruber (2012) explains that when we experience positive emotions, we are likely to focus on things that will sustain that happiness. Cyders & Smith (2008) found that extreme positive emotions can increase our likelihood to engage in risky behaviours like bingeing on food and alcohol, using drugs and other substances, as well as engaging in risky sexual behaviour.

Mauss et al., (2011), researched that happier employees fail to experience happiness after the task is over. There relatability.

Here are a few more interesting facts highlighted in Marta Zarakasa's (2012) article in *The Washington Post*.

- Experiencing high life satisfaction when you are young can impact the income you earn later on in life (Deiner, n.d.).
- Similarly, there is a higher likelihood for students who are extremely happy to drop out of school compared to those who are moderately happy (Deiner).
- Extreme positive emotions can make us more prone to stereotype thinking, such as making decisions based on gender (Forgas, 2011).
- Cheerful people find it more difficult to detect a lie, thus being more easily deceived than those in a negative mood (Forgas).
- Really good feelings can also make us more selfish.

Waber (2011) notes that most of the workplace happiness issues are concerned with employee privacy and employee rights. Another issue is of trust when employees believe that, management wants something in return from them that's why they are trying to keep them happy. (Cameron, 2012)

Dr. Peggy Kern from Melbourne University and one of the world's leading researchers on wellbeing and its impact" states that acceptance of the current situation also increases the resilience of employee, he mentioned in his research that people who are always in the happy mood finds difficult to accept the present situation.

Research explains that "If instead, we aim for wellbeing – our ability to feel good and function effectively – this expands our focus to also connecting with others, having a sense of purpose in what we do, and accomplishing the things that matter to us."

Here are five ways you can create a balanced approach to improving your wellbeing at work on International Happiness Day, Michelle Mc Quaid (2016)

Balancing heartfelt positivity- positive psychologists Robert Biswas-Diener and Todd Kashdan, They suggest an 80/20 rule of thumb for heartfelt positive emotions to heart-straining negative ones as a guide for wellbeing. Not sure where your emotions are sitting. Track them using the free two-minute test at www.positivityratio.com.

Developing your strengths: focusing only on our strengths can give us a false sense of competence, result in over-used strengths becoming toxic and ignores our weaknesses at our own risk. It's not enough to just "use" your strengths more, instead try "developing" your

strengths by knowing what they are and tuning into the moments when you're underplaying, overplaying or finding the right strength, in the right amount for the right outcomes.

Creating authentic connections: Whatever your "ideal" number might look like studies suggest finding even micro-moments of positive connections can help to lower our levels of stress and improve our concentration and focus at work. Try to take the time today to ask someone an appreciative question (i.e. "What's working well at the moment?"), perform an act of kindness or express some genuine gratitude and be present in these moments.

Find a healthy sense of meaning: Professor Adam Grant at Wharton Business School notes the single strongest predictor of having a sense of meaning and purpose in our work is the belief that what we do has a positive impact on others.

Nurture hope: Researchers suggest this is the difference between wishing and hoping. When we hope we set clear 'want-to' goals, pathways to reach them and find ways to maintain our willpower. As a result, other things being equal researchers have found hope is worth about an hour a day in terms of productivity at work and helps to improve our health and wellbeing.

Conclusion:

Though the paper focuses on the importance of happiness and subjective wellbeing for the employees and its effect on business, it also tries to bring out the dark side of happiness. Research suggests that organisations should be conscious of applying the happiness antecedents. The new methods should be adopted for the happiness and SWB of employees but at the same time, the organisation should be alert for the consequences of happiness and SWB. The research covers the main definitions of happiness and subjective wellbeing and also states the main difference between them. The research sets the base for further research on happiness at workplace and SWB of employees.

References:

- Ann Wilkinson, R., Chilton, G., Ann Wilkinson, R., & Chilton, G. (2018). Happiness and Wellbeing. In *Positive Art Therapy Theory and Practice*.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315694245-3>
- Bowling, D. L. (2015). The problem with emotion. *Physics of Life Reviews*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.plrev.2015.04.016>
- Côté, R., & Hall, J. (1995). Industrial parks as ecosystems. *Journal of Cleaner Production*.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-6526\(95\)00041-C](https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-6526(95)00041-C)
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.95.3.542>
- Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00415>
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. In *Psychological Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.125.2.276>
- DINAN, T. G., THAKORE, J., & O'KEANE, V. (1994). Lowering Cortisol enhances growth hormone response to growth hormone releasing hormone in healthy subjects. *Acta Physiologica Scandinavica*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-1716.1994.tb09761.x>
- Kammann, R., & Flett, R. (1983). Affectometer 2: A scale to measure current level of general happiness. *Australian Journal of Psychology*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00049538308255070>
- Kashdan, T. B., Biswas-Diener, R., & King, L. A. (2008). Reconsidering happiness: The costs of distinguishing between hedonics and eudaimonia. *Journal of Positive Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760802303044>
- Landes, X. (2016). Building Happiness Indicators Some Philosophical and Political Issues. *Les Ateliers de l'éthique*. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1035325ar>
- Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psychological Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1996.tb00355.x>

- Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How Do Simple Positive Activities Increase Well-Being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721412469809>
- Naci, H., & Ioannidis, J. P. A. (2015). Evaluation of wellness determinants and interventions by citizen scientists. In *JAMA - Journal of the American Medical Association*.
<https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2015.6160>
- Plomin, R., & Nesselroade, J. R. (1990). Behavioral Genetics and Personality Change. *Journal of Personality*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1990.tb00913.x>
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). The Self-Consciousness Scale: A Revised Version for Use with General Populations. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1985.tb02268.x>
- Tchiki Davis. (2019). What Is Well-Being? Definition, Types, and Well-Being Skills | Psychology Today. In *Psychology Today*.
- Tellegen, A., Watson, D., & Clark, L. A. (1999). On the dimensional and hierarchical structure of affect. *Psychological Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00157>
- Veenhoven, R. (2012). Happiness, also known as “Life satisfaction” and “Subjective well-being.” In *Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research*.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2421-1_3
- WILSON, W. R. (1967). CORRELATES OF AVOWED HAPPINESS. *Psychological Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0024431>
- Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2000). Diener-Subjective_Well-Being.pdf. In *The Science of Happiness and Life Satisfaction*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0017>
- Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., Diener, E., & Larsen, R. J. (2009). Assessing Well-Being. *The Science of Wellbeing The Collected Works of Ed Diener*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2354-4>
- Diener, E., Emmons, R.A., Larsen, R.J. & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, Vol. 49, 71-75

- Diener, E., Pavot, W. & Sandvik, E. (1991). Happiness is the frequency, not intensity of positive and negative affect. (In: Strack, F. et. al. (Eds.), 'Subjective wellbeing'. London, UK: Pergamon.)
- Ehrhardt, J. et al (2000). Stability of life satisfaction over time Analysis of change in ranks in national population. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 1, pp. 177-205
- Gerson, E.M. (1976). On quality of life. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 41, pp. 793-806
- Kahneman, D. (1999). Objective happiness. (In: Kahneman, D., Diener, E. & Schwarz, N. (Eds.), 'Wellbeing: foundations of hedonic psychology' (pp.3-25). New York U.S.A.: Russell Sage Foundations.)
- Argyle, M., & Lu, L. (1990). The happiness of extraverts. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 11, 1011-1017.
- Carver, C. S., Lawrence, J. W., & Scheier, M. F. (1996). A control-process perspective on the origins of affect. In L. L. Martin & A. Tesser (Eds.), *Striving and feeling: Interactions among goals, affect, and regulation* (pp. 11-52). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.95.3.542>
- Diener, E., Sandvik, E., & Larsen, R. J. (1985). Age and sex effects for emotional intensity. *Developmental Psychology*, 21, 542-546.
- Diener, E., Sandvik, E., Pavot, W., & Fujita, F. (1992). Extraversion and subjective well-being in a U.S. national probability sample. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 26, 205-215.
- Diener, E., Sandvik, E., Seidlitz, L., & Diener, M. (1993). The relationship between income and subjective well-being: Relative or absolute? *Social Indicators Research*, 28, 195-223.
- Diener, E., Sapyta, J. J., & Suh, E. (1998). Subjective well-being is essential to well-being. *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, 33-37.
- Diener, E., Smith, H., & Fujita, F. (1995). The personality structure of affect. *Journal of ISME MANAGEMENT JOURNAL – Xplore*
Bi-Annual Online Journal on Contemporary Issues in Management

Personality and Social Psychology, 69, 130-141.

Diener, E., & Suh, E. (1997). Measuring quality of life: Economic, social, and subjective indicators. *Social Indicators Research*, 40, 189-216.

Diener, E., & Suh, E. (1998). Age and subjective well-being: An international analysis. *Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 17, 304-324.

Diener, E., & Suh, E. M. (Eds.), (in press). *Subjective well-being across cultures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Diener, E., Wolsic, B., & Fujita (1995). Physical attractiveness and subjective well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 120-129.

Dinan, T. G. (1994). Glucocorticoids and the genesis of depressive illness: A psychobiological model. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 164, 365-371.

Dooley, D., Catalano, R., Rook, K., & Serxner, S. (1989). Economic stress and suicide: Multilevel analyses: I. Aggregate time-series analyses of economic stress and suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 19, 321-336.

Fujita, F., Diener, E., & Sandvik, E. (1991). Gender differences in negative affect and well-being: The case for emotional intensity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 427-434.

Matlin, M. W., & Stang, D. J. (1978). The Pollyanna Principle: Selectivity in language, memory, and thought. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman. Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1993). The intelligence of emotional intelligence. *Intelligence*, 17, 433-442.

WILSON, W. R. (1967). CORRELATES OF AVOWED HAPPINESS. *Psychological Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0024431>

DINAN, T. G., THAKORE, J., & O'KEANE, V. (1994). Lowering Cortisol enhances growth hormone response to growth hormone releasing hormone in healthy subjects. *Acta Physiologica Scandinavica*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-1716.1994.tb09761>.

Tellegen, A., Watson, D., & Clark, L. A. (1999). On the dimensional and hierarchical structure of affect. *Psychological Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00157>

Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psychological Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1996.tb00355.x>

Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00415>