

Correlates of Subjective Well-being in Relationships: A Comparative Study

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Abstract : The present study is titled “Correlates of Subjective Well-being: A Comparative Study”. It aimed at examining the factors that contribute to Subjective well-being and to find out if there is a difference between married individuals and cohabiting individuals in terms of subjective well-being. The sample consisted of 60 individuals who were matched with respect to the number of years they have been in a committed relationship. It was hypothesized that there is a relationship between subjective well-being and factors such as positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. It was also hypothesized that there is no significant difference between married individuals and cohabiting individuals in terms of positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being. The questionnaires used for the study were Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale and Subjective well-being Inventory. The findings of the result show that there is no correlation between subjective well-being and the factors such as positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. The findings also show that there is no significant difference between married group and cohabiting group in terms of positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.

I. Introduction

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING:

Subjective well-being is one of the central concerns of Positive Psychology. The field Positive Psychology was founded by Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi.

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to a person’s overall cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life. It is how individuals view or perceive their own lives. An individual who has a high level of satisfaction with his or her life, and experiences a greater positive affect or less of negative affect, is believed to have a high level of Subjective Well-Being. Subjective Well-Being depends on what people think or feel about their lives. Life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect are three major components of subjective well-being, and they are believed to be independent factors. It is a broad category of phenomenon that includes people’s emotional responses, domain satisfaction and global judgment of life satisfaction. However, there could be various other factors that contribute to or affect a person’s subjective well-being.

Subjective Well-being also takes into account how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments. According to Diener, it is a combination of life satisfaction and the balanced frequency of positive and negative affect.

Subjective Well-being is an umbrella term for various factors, which are Pleasant Emotions, Unpleasant Emotions, Global Life Satisfaction and Domain Satisfaction (Diener, 2002). Pleasant emotions include joy, contentment, happy, love, etc. Unpleasant emotions include sadness, worry, anger, stress, etc. Domain satisfaction refers to an individual's perception about the various domains of his or her life, like marriage, work, health, leisure, etc.

II. Methodology

Research Questions:

1. What are the factors associated to Subjective Well-being in relationships?
2. What factors of Subjective Well-being differ in two domains of relationships such as marriage and cohabitation?
3. What are the contributing factors which predict Subjective Well-being in relationships?

Objectives of the study:

Section A:

1. To explore the factors associated to Subjective Well-being.
 - a. To find the relationship between positive affect and subjectivewell-being.
 - b. To find the relationship between negative affect and subjectivewell-being.
 - c. To find the relationship between life satisfaction and subjectivewell-being.
 - d. To find the relationship between relationship satisfaction andsubjective well-being.

Section B:

2. To find the differences in factors influencing subjective wellbeing between two domains of relationship such as marriage and cohabitation
 - a. To find out the differences in positive affect between marriage and cohabitation on positive affect.
 - b. To find the differences in negative affect between marriage andcohabitation.
 - c. To find the differences in life satisfaction between marriageand cohabitation.
 - d. To find the differences in relationship satisfactionbetween marriage and cohabitation.

HYPOTHESES:**Section A:**

1. There is a relationship between subjective well-being and relationships.
 - a. There is a relationship between positive affect and subjective well-being.
 - b. There is a relationship between negative affect and subjective well-being.
 - c. There is a relationship between life satisfaction and subjective well-being.
 - d. There is a relationship between relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being.

SECTION B:

2. There is no difference in subjective well-being between the two domains of relationship such as marriage and cohabitation.
 - a. There is no difference in positive affect between marriage and cohabitation.
 - b. There is no difference in negative affect between marriage and cohabitation.
 - c. There is no difference in life satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.
 - d. There is no difference in relationship satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:

1. **Subjective Well-being:** Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgements. (Diener, 1984)
2. **Positive affect:** Positive Affect refers to experiencing pleasant emotions like enthusiasm, joy, and happiness for life. It is considered to be one the major components of subjective well-being.
3. **Negative affect:** Negative Affect refers to experiencing unpleasant emotions which are usually undesirable or unwanted, like hopelessness, worthless, sad, etc.
4. **Life satisfaction:** It is a state of feeling saturated in life; it may be due to specific events in life or life itself. It is a sense of happiness for having achieved something or for having reached the desired/aspired goal in life. It differs from individual to individual along with age and time.
5. **Relationship satisfaction:** It refers to how happy an individual is about his or her relationship with his or her spouse. It refers to how an individual perceives his or relationship with his or her partner. Relationship Satisfaction in any relationship is one of the most major factors that contribute to one's Subjective Well-being.
6. **Marriage:** It is the formal union of a man and a woman, which is recognized by the law, by which they become husband and wife. It is an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged and accepted.

7. **Cohabitation:** It is an arrangement, where two people who live together, without being married in an emotionally and/or sexually intimate relationship on a long-term or permanent basis. In most societies it is viewed as an alternative which is less likely than marriage to lead to a long-term stable commitment.

Variables:

Section A:

Criterion variable: Subjective Well-being

Predictor variable:

1. Positive affect
2. Negative Affect
3. Life Satisfaction
4. Relationship Satisfaction

Section B:

Independent Variables: two domains of relationships (marriage and cohabitation)

Dependent Variables:

1. Subjective Well-being
2. Positive affect
3. Negative affect
4. Life satisfaction
5. Relationship satisfaction

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

FOR MARRIED INDIVIDUALS:

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Heterosexual individuals who are married for 2-4 years.
 2. Married individuals who do not have children.
 3. Individuals who do not have any major physical and psychological illness.
 4. Individuals who live in Bangalore City.
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1. Heterosexual individuals who are married for more than 4 years.
 2. Individuals who have children.
 3. Individuals who have any kind of physical and psychological illness.
 4. Individuals who live outside Bangalore City.

FOR COHABITING INDIVIDUALS:**Inclusion criteria:**

1. Heterosexual individuals who have been cohabiting for 2-4 years.
2. Individuals who do not children.
3. Individuals who do not have any kind of physical and psychological illness.
4. Individuals who live in Bangalore City.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

1. Heterosexual individuals who have been cohabiting for more than 4 years.
2. Individuals who have children.
3. Individuals who have any kind of physical and psychological illness.
4. Individuals who live outside Bangalore City.

Research Design: The research design used for the analysis of data was comparative correlation design. Snow ball sampling has been used by the researcher. The sample consists of 30 married couples and 30 cohabiting couples residing in Bangalore City.

TOOLS OF ASSESSMENT:

1. Socio-demographic data
2. Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale
3. Satisfaction with Life Scale
4. Relationship Assessment Scale
5. Subjective Well-being Inventory

1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

Socio-demographic data sheet includes the details of the participants such as name, age, sex, educational qualification, number of years of marriage of cohabitation, etc.

2. POSITIVE AFFECT NEGATIVE AFFECT SCALE:

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. The respondents are required to read each item and mark their response on a 5-point scale ranging from Very Slightly or not at all (1) to Extremely (5). They need to indicate to what extent they feel in that particular way at the moment, that is, at that moment or the extent to which they have felt this way over the past week. The positive affect score and negative affect score are found out separately. The maximum and minimum scores under positive and negative affect are 65 and 13 respectively.

3. SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE:

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by William Pavot and Ed Diener was developed to assess satisfaction with the respondent's life as a whole. It consists of five statements with which one may agree or disagree. Using the 1–7 scale, one has to indicate their agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction level.

Reliability: The SWLS is shown to have favorable psychometric properties, including high internal consistency and high temporal reliability. Scores on the SWLS correlate moderately to highly with other measures of subjective well-being and correlate predictably with specific personality characteristics. It is noted that the SWLS suited for use with different agegroups. [as quoted in Diener et.al (1984)]

4. RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE:

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendrick, Dicke&Hendrick, 1998) is a brief and short scale designed to test romantic relationship satisfaction. The RAS is unique in that it is worded to suit all types of romantic relationships and not just marital satisfaction. It is a 7- item scale questionnaire. The scale is rated on a 5-point scale with different descriptions for each item. Respondents reply to items such as "How much do you love your partner?" The scores are added and presented as raw scores. The maximum and minimum scores that can be obtained are 35 and 6 respectively.

Reliability: The reliability of RAS was moderate with an average of 0.872 across many studies (Graham, Diebels&Barnow, 2011). The scale reported a mean inter-item correlation of .49 and an alpha of .86 (Hendrick, 1988).

5. SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING INVENTORY:

It was designed by Dr. H Sell (New Delhi) and Dr. R Nagpal (New Delhi) to measure feeling of well-being or ill-being as experienced by an individual or a group of individuals in various day-to-day life concerns. It consists of 40 items and measures 11 factorial dimensions but in the present study only the total score of the items were considered. The respondents are required to answer each item using a 3-point scale ranging from 1 (very much) to 3 (not so much). The minimum and maximum scores of the test are 40 and 120 respectively. Two items from this questionnaire were not considered for the current study because they were regarding children so the minimum and maximum scores that can be obtained are 38 and 114 respectively.

PROCEDURE OF ADMINISTRATION:

All the individuals who were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and were willing to participate were briefed about the present study.

The participants were asked to go through the consent form and then start filling in the socio-demographic data. They were informed that they should respond honestly because their responses will be kept confidential. They were allowed to withdraw from the test at any point



of time during the test. The participants took about 30-40 minutes to respond to the four questionnaires.

After the participants answered the questionnaires, the response sheets were collected and scored based on the scoring norms of each test.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Both qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis were carried out. Under quantitative analysis, the statistical tests used were-

Descriptive statistics: All demographic details were analyzed through Mean, Standard deviation, Frequencies and Percentages.

Inferential statistics: 1. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation
2. Independent t-test

After obtaining the results through quantitative analysis, the researcher was curious to explore the possible factors associated with the obtained results. Hence, an unstructured telephonic interview was carried out randomly on 6 participants of the study, out of which 3 were married and 3 were cohabiting.

The current study is titled "Correlates of Subjective Well-being in Relationships: a Comparative Study. The results of the present study are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

SECTION A:

- 1) To explore the factors associated to Subjective Well-being.
 - a) To find the relationship between positive affect and subjective well-being.
 - b) To find the relationship between negative affect and subjective well-being.
 - c) To find the relationship between life satisfaction and subjective well-being.
 - d) To find the relationship between relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being.

SECTION B:

- 2) To find the differences in factors influencing subjective wellbeing between two domains of relationship such as marriage and cohabitation.
 - a) To find out the differences in positive affect between marriage and cohabitation.

- b) To find the differences in negative affect between marriage and cohabitation.
- c) To find the differences in life satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.
- d) To find the differences in relationship satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.

The hypotheses in the study were:

SECTION A:

- 1) There is a relationship between subjective well-being and relationships.
 - a) There is a relationship between positive affect and subjective well-being.
 - b) There is a relationship between negative affect and subjective well-being.
 - c) There is a relationship between life satisfaction and subjective well-being.
 - d) There is a relationship between relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being.

SECTION B:

- e) There is no difference in subjective well-being between the two domains of relationship such as marriage and cohabitation.
- f) There is no difference in positive affect between marriage and cohabitation.
- g) There is no difference in negative affect between marriage and cohabitation.
- h) There is no difference in life satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.
- i) There is no difference in relationship satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.

Results:

The results of this study have been presented in the current chapter under the following sections-

Section I: Descriptive Statistics of variables.

The Section I presents the means and standard deviation of scores obtained by married individuals on each variable. These are presented in tabular form.

TABLE I.A: MEAN AND SDS OF THE SCORES OF THE VARIABLES OBTAINED BY MARRIED INDIVIDUALS

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive emotions	46	10.1
Negative emotions	31	8
Life satisfaction	28.2	6.2
Relationship satisfaction	29	5.4
Subjective well-being	89	11.4

Table .I.B: Mean and SDs of the scores of variables obtained by cohabiting individuals.

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive emotions	50	9
Negative emotions	27.2	8
Satisfaction with life	26	6.5
Relationship satisfaction	28	6.5
Subjective well-being	89.5	10

SECTION II: RESULTS USING INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

In this section, the results connected to the testing of hypothesis using inferential statistics are presented.

SECTION II.A : ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESES SECTION

The first section of hypotheses are a set of directional hypothesis which states that-There is a relationship between subjective well-being and relationships.

- There is a relationship between positive affect and subjective well-being.
- There is a relationship between negative affect and subjective well-being.
- There is a relationship between life satisfaction and subjective well-being.
- There is a relationship between relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being.

To test the significance of the results for the first section of hypotheses, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was utilized. It was used to see the correlation between subjective well-being and the other variables such as positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.

The entire sample consisted of 60 individuals who are in a relationship (married individuals and cohabiting individuals). The results below show the correlation between subjective well-being and the other variables in relationships.

VARIABLES	SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	0.09
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	-0.25
LIFE SATISFACTION	0.19
RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION	0.18

SECTION III.: ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESES SECTION 2

The second section of hypotheses are a set of null hypotheses which states that-

There is no difference in subjective well-being between the two domains of relationship such as marriage and cohabitation.

- There is no difference in positive affect between marriage and cohabitation.
- There is no difference in negative affect between marriage and cohabitation.
- There is no difference in life satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.
- There is no difference in relationship satisfaction between marriage and cohabitation.

To test the significance of the results for this hypothesis, Independent 't' test was used.

It was used to see if there is a significance difference between married and cohabiting group. The entire sample consists of equal number of married individuals and cohabiting individuals. The results below show the married individuals and cohabiting individuals in terms of positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being.

Variable	Married (n=30)		Cohabiting(n=30)		„t“ value	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Positive Emotions	45.9	10.1	49.9	9	-1.5	0.4
Negative Emotions	30.8	7.8	27.2	7.7	1.8	0.8
Life Satisfaction	28.2	6.2	26	6.5	1.3	0.6

Relationship Satisfaction	28.6	5.4	27.8	6.5	0.5	0.1
Subjective Well-being	88.6	11.4	89.5	9.8	-0.3	0.3

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

According to the results it was seen that there is no significant correlation between subjectivewell-being and the other variables such as positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction in relationships.

It was also seen that there is no significant differences between the married individuals and cohabiting individuals in terms of positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Since the results revealed that, that there is no significant difference between married group and cohabiting group on positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being, an unstructured telephonic interview was carried out randomly on 6 participants of the study, out of which 3 were married and 3 were cohabiting to know their opinions on marriage and cohabitation respectively.

Based on the married individuals' opinions, it can be said that they have more positive views about marriage. The emerged factors which contribute to their well-being were family and social support, trust, emotional attachment, commitment and financial support.

The cohabiting individuals seem to prefer cohabitation to marriage. The emerged factors which contribute to their well-being were financial-freedom, quality time spent together, perceived low level of burden and perceived less expectations from the family and society. The other factors were freedom to take independent decisions with regard to career, expenses, etc. The researcher also felt that there is no boundary maintained in the relationship. Because they are a minority group and various stigmas exist regarding cohabitation, they may feel the need to maintain the standards of an ideal relationship.

Since the results showed that there is no significant difference between the married group and cohabiting group, an unstructured telephonic interview was carried out on 6 individuals, out of which 3 were married and 3 were cohabiting to know their opinions on marriage and cohabitation, respectively. Both the groups showed more preference towards the kind of relationship they were in.

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