



STUDENTS' LIFE SATISFACTION: THE RELATIONSHIP OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY – A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship of cultural sensitivity, and subjective well-being with life satisfaction among undergraduate students and to examine if males and females differ in their cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. A total of 228 participants participated in the study which included 44 males and 185 females completed the self-report measures of cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. The collected responses are subjected to correlational analysis and students' independent t-tests. The results revealed that cultural sensitivity and subjective well-being are significantly and positively correlated with students' life satisfaction. Moreover, results also revealed that measures of cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction are indifferent with respect to students' gender. Therefore, the study highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and subjective well-being in students' life satisfaction.

Keywords: Cultural Sensitivity, Subjective Well-being, Life satisfaction, Undergraduate Students.

Introduction

Researchers in the field of social psychology has been studying different behaviours exhibited by an individual in various settings, but recently much focus has been given to assessing and exploring the role played by constructs linked to the culture in shaping individual behaviour, as indicated by the studies conducted by Diener et al., (2003) and many other prominent researchers. One such construct is cultural sensitivity, which may be defined as a set of abilities that allow one to comprehend how to better help others in one's own communities by learning about and getting to know those who are unlike oneself (Wittenberg et al., 2015). The main elements of cultural sensitivity include respecting and appreciating one's own culture, appreciating diversity, realising that cultural diversity will influence an individual's communication and educational participation in various ways, being open to learning about the customs and traits of other cultures, and being willing to modify one's communication and behaviour to fit with others' cultural norms.



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Forms of cultural sensitivity

Multicultural sensitivity:

It refers to the understanding, sensitivity and appreciation of the history, values, experiences and lifestyles of groups that include: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status and mental/physical abilities. It helps one to build stronger interpersonal skills, increase self-knowledge, increase understanding of others, challenge preconceptions and prejudices, and better prepare oneself to live in a multicultural society.

Intercultural sensitivity:

Intercultural sensitivity refers to the capacity to identify and feel pertinent cultural differences. (Hammer et al., 2003). According to researchers, intercultural sensitivity may be developed through six phases. The phases offer a useful framework for figuring out how to use and enhance the ability for cross-cultural sensitivity and cooperation.

Subjective well-being

Over the past few decades, subjective well-being (SWB) has been extensively studied domain of positive psychology. According to the definition of subjective well-being (SWB), it is "a person's cognitive and affective judgements of his or her life (Ed Diener et al., 1998). The cognitive component includes how an individual evaluates their level of life satisfaction as a whole and precisely within a particular domain. The affective component includes feelings, sentiments, and emotions. When the feelings, thoughts, and sentiments experienced are pleasurable, affect is considered positive. In comparison when the feelings, thoughts, and sentiments experienced are undesirable, affect is considered negative. SWB encompasses concepts such as positive and negative affect, happiness, and life satisfaction. Positive psychology is focused with the study of subjective well-being in particular. SWB is a persistent attribute that is highly connected to personality traits. There has been evidence indicating health and SWB may have a reciprocal impact, since improved health is related with increased levels of happiness. Past research studies have proposed that life satisfaction is one of the important factors which is directly related with individuals' overall well-being (Diener et al., 1999). A study conducted by Argan et al.,(2018) found that an individual's satisfaction with one's life is significantly related with one's overall well-being. Similarly, Cho & Lee, (2014) found that life satisfaction is one of the important predictors of well-being. According to Diener (2009) components of SWB are independent entities that must be understood individually, notwithstanding their strong relationship. Therefore, SWB may be regarded "a broad area of scientific value rather than a particular unique construct". Because of the emphasis on subjective components of well-being. SWB often undermines objective circumstances such as material situations or health, despite the fact that they might impact SWB evaluations. The primary focus of SWB is on the way an individual evaluates their own life, including emotional experiences of pleasure and suffering in reaction to specific occurrences and cognitive assessments of



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what a person deems a happy life. SWB has two components: affect balance and life satisfaction. The combination of a person's scores on the two components yields a total SWB score. These scores are maintained distinctively in certain circumstances. Affect balance relates to a person's emotions, moods, and sentiments. These might be entirely good, entirely negative, or a mix of the two.

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction has been defined as a cognitive and judgmental process which includes an individual's overall evaluation of one's quality of life (Diener et al., 1985). Literature has provided strong evidences for the association of life satisfaction and well-being and proposed it as significant determinant. Life satisfaction is a person's perception of how his or her life has gone thus far and how they think about the direction it is heading in the future (Pavot & Diener, 2008). It is a well-being indicator that may be measured in terms of mood, contentment with relationships with others and with goals attained, self-concepts, and self-perceived ability to cope with daily life. It is having a positive attitude concerning one's life in general rather than one's current sensations. Life satisfaction has now been evaluated in connection to people's economic status, level of education, accomplishments, and place of living. Life satisfaction might represent positive events that have influenced a person. These events have the potential to inspire people to pursue and achieve their goals. Two emotions can influence how individuals interpret their life. These include hope and optimism, which are both cognitive processes that are often directed towards achieving and perceiving objectives. Furthermore, optimism is associated with increased life satisfaction, whereas pessimism is associated with depressive symptoms. A study conducted by Lathabhavan & Sudevan, (2022) found that life satisfaction is inversely related with different psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety and increased levels of stress. Moreover, the study indicated that an individual's satisfaction with one life is significantly and positively related with an individual's overall well-being. Several studies have indicated that self-esteem has a significant impact on life satisfaction. Past research studies have indicated that life satisfaction can be predicted by various factors which include self-esteem, self-efficacy, income, marriage etc. but it's vital to explore other factors that can predict an individual's life satisfaction. Which will help to improve understanding of individuals' life satisfaction. Past studies have indicated a strong relationship between life satisfaction, cultural sensitivity and different components of the well-being (Parletta et al., 2016). Keeping in view the above discussion we propose the following objectives.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the correlation between cultural sensitivity and subjective well-being of undergraduate students.
2. To compare cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction of undergraduate students with respect to their gender.



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HYPOTHESES:

On the basis of the objectives framed above, the following null hypotheses have been formulated:

H₀₁: There will be no significant correlation between cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction of undergraduate students.

H₀₂: There is a significant difference in cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction between males and females

Method

Participants and procedure

The sample of the present study consists of undergraduate students selected purposively from the university of Kashmir. A total of 250 participants participated in the study which included 44 males and 185 females. The questionnaire was self-administered in the classroom, and it took approximately 10-15 minutes for students to complete it. Out of 250 students, only 228 valid responses were recorded.

Measures used

Cultural sensitivity

For the assessment of cultural sensitivity, the Inventory for cross-cultural sensitivity developed by Cushner (1989) was used. Participants were asked to rate all the items using a 6-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree, to Strongly Agree). The internal consistency of CSEs is found to be 0.82.

Subjective Well-being

For the assessment of subjective well-being, The short version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental well-being Scale (Stewart-Brown et al., 2009), was used to measure students' well-being. The internal consistency of the well-being scale is found to be 0.72.

Life satisfaction

For the assessment of Life satisfaction, the Life satisfaction scale developed by Dr. Promila Singh & George Joseph (2007) was used. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of scale is found to be 0.91

Data analysis

For achieving the objectives of the present study, the collected data was analyzed by using various appropriate statistical techniques with the help of SPSS. Firstly, to test the reliability we calculated Cronbach's alpha values and inter-construct correlation to establish the reliability of the measures used. Second, descriptive analyses (mean and standard deviations) and correlational analysis of cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction were analysed. Third, the independent t-test was conducted to examine the difference in cultural



sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction with regard to gender.

Results:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, and correlations for all measures (N=230).					
Variables	mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Cultural sensitivity	3.86	0.73	1		
2. subjective wellbeing	3.25	0.46	.336**	1	
3. life satisfaction	3.49	0.62	.567**	.469**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

The descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlations between cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction of undergraduate students are presented in Table 1. The table shows cultural sensitivity ($r = 0.567$, $p < 0.01$) and subjective well-being ($r = 0.469$, $p < 0.01$) are both significantly and positively correlated with life satisfaction.

Table 2: Mean differences in cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction between males and females with respect to gender.							
Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-value	Sig
Cultural sensitivity	Male	44	3.91	0.80	227	0.591	.555
	Female	185	3.84	0.71			
subjective wellbeing	Male	44	3.26	0.42	227	0.216	.829
	Female	185	3.24	0.47			
life satisfaction	Male	44	3.62	0.60	227	1.468	.144
	Female	185	3.46	0.62			



The results of the t-test reported in table 2, indicate that the calculated t-value of cultural sensitivity ($t=0.591$), subjective well-being ($t= 0.216$), and life satisfaction ($t= 1.468$) were non-significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that males and females do not differ on cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to study the relationship of cultural sensitivity, and subjective well-being with life satisfaction among undergraduate students as well as to examine if males and females differ in their cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. The findings of the current study indicated significant positive correlations between cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. These results correspond with earlier research on the association between cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

Moreover, our results regarding mean differences in cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction with respect to gender were insignificant. These results are in line with the previous studies. This might indicate that the male and female students perceive cultural sensitivity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction in a similar manner.

The findings of the present have significant implications. Life satisfaction when seen in the light of cultural/socialization gives an individual an overview of his functioning within himself and outwards. In this context, the present study might prove handy for policymakers in training individuals to understand how emotional dynamics operate across cultures or different levels of socialization. The present study might also be helpful in highlighting the importance of being culturally adequate how to respect one's own culture, the culture of others and the integration of the two. Understanding the sensitivities of the students towards different cultures will help the researchers in better understanding and resolution of issues faced due to cultural diversity in the various educational institutions. Apart from the significant implications the current study has some limitations. First, the sample size of the present study is very small which weakens the generalizability of the obtained findings. Second, the data was solely based on self-report measures which are susceptible to social desirability. Future research can employ a variety of assessment methods to increase the validity of the findings

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