

# SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS AND HOLISTIC WELL-BEING: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY USING A NOVEL MULTIDIMENSIONAL MEASURE

Sumayya Salim Khatri<sup>\*1</sup>, Dr. Anila Amber Malik<sup>2</sup>

<sup>\*1,2</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Karachi

<sup>\*1</sup>sumayyaadeem@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: \*  
Sumayya Salim Khatri

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15876362>

| Received       | Revised      | Accepted      | Published     |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| 04 April, 2025 | 25 May, 2025 | 25 June, 2025 | 14 July, 2025 |

## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the relationship between subjective happiness and holistic well-being using the Brief Khatri–Anila Measure of Well-Being (Brief KAMoW), a newly developed scale designed by the author to assess four well-being domains: Physical, Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Well-Being. A sample of 100 university students aged 19 to 24 years completed the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and the Brief KAMoW. Pearson’s correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the predictive relationship between subjective happiness and the well-being domains. Correlational results showed that subjective happiness was significantly associated with psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. However, multiple regression analysis revealed that only spiritual well-being was a significant predictor of subjective happiness when all domains were considered simultaneously. These findings highlight the central role of spiritual well-being in fostering happiness and suggest that spiritual fulfillment may serve as a key emotional anchor in positive mental health. The study offers a more nuanced understanding of how happiness interacts with various aspects of well-being, paving the way for broader, more integrative models of psychological wellness.*

**Keywords:** Subjective Happiness, Psychological Well-Being, Spiritual Well Being, KAMoW.

## INTRODUCTION

Happiness and well-being are interrelated concepts that have drawn increasing attention in psychological research, especially in the domain of positive psychology. Subjective happiness is a construct that reflects how individuals evaluate their own lives, considering both cognitive judgments and emotional experiences (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). The broader construct of well-being, on the other hand, has been conceptualized in both hedonic and eudaimonic terms. While the hedonic approach emphasizes pleasure attainment and pain avoidance, the eudaimonic view focuses on meaning, self-realization, and the full functioning of the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Multiple models of well-being have emerged over time. Ryff and Keyes (1995) proposed a multidimensional model comprising six components: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Seligman (2011), through his PERMA model, emphasized Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. However, while these models are comprehensive, they often fall short in encompassing all culturally relevant dimensions, especially in non-Western contexts. This study introduces a newly developed scale—the Brief KAMoW (Khatri–Anila Measure of Well-Being)—designed to provide a holistic yet

concise measure of well-being. Developed as part of the author's PhD thesis, the Brief KAMoW assesses well-being across four domains: physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. These dimensions align with both traditional and contemporary understandings of human flourishing.

In addition to these models, other robust theoretical frameworks further underscore the link between happiness and well-being. For example, Diener's Subjective Well-Being Theory (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999) positions happiness as a core indicator of well-being, combining life satisfaction with emotional experiences. Similarly, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the satisfaction of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as central to fostering both well-being and subjective happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Empirical findings support these theoretical claims; Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2005) demonstrated that subjective happiness not only results from positive life experiences but also contributes to enhanced health, productivity, and interpersonal success. Cross-cultural studies, such as those by Joshanloo and Ghaedi (2009), further emphasize that spiritual and relational well-being may carry more weight in collectivistic societies compared to more individualistic dimensions of happiness. Despite these robust frameworks and findings, empirical studies that link subjective happiness with a comprehensive, multidimensional measure of well-being are limited. Most studies either use general life satisfaction or focus solely on psychological well-being. This paper fills that gap by investigating how subjective happiness correlates with the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual domains of well-being. By doing so, it contributes to the literature by validating a new scale and exploring its relationship with an established measure of happiness.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the strength and nature of the relationship between subjective happiness and each of the four dimensions of well-being as measured by the Brief KAMoW. It is hypothesized that all four dimensions will show a positive correlation with subjective happiness, with psychological and social well-being being the strongest predictors.

## Methodology

### Participants

A total of 100 participants (50% female, 50% male), who were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Participants were university students aged between 19 and 24, residing in Karachi. Inclusion criteria included being fluent in English language and not currently undergoing psychiatric treatment. The sample was diverse in terms of socioeconomic background, education, and marital status.

### Measures

#### Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

Developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), the SHS is a 4-item instrument designed to measure global subjective happiness. Each item is scored on a 7-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of happiness. The SHS has demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > .80) and has been validated across various cultural contexts.

#### Brief KAMoW Scale

The Brief KAMoW is a 16-item scale developed by the author during doctoral research. It evaluates well-being across four domains:

- **Physical Well-Being:** Includes items on energy levels, physical health, sleep quality, and bodily autonomy.
- **Psychological Well-Being:** Captures emotional regulation, self-esteem, optimism, and mental clarity.
- **Social Well-Being:** Measures social support, quality of relationships, community involvement, and communication skills.
- **Spiritual Well-Being:** Reflects life purpose, existential reflection, faith-based practices, and inner peace.

Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Preliminary analyses from the doctoral study indicated that each subscale The internal consistency of the Brief KAMoW subscales ranged from  $\alpha = .50$  to  $.72$ . While some subscales fell below conventional thresholds, the lower values may reflect the brief nature of the subscales rather than inadequate reliability.

### Procedure

Participants were invited to take part in the study either through online surveys or in supervised settings, depending on accessibility. After obtaining informed consent, participants completed the SHS followed by the Brief KAMoW scale. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. The average time for completion was approximately 15 minutes. Researchers were available to answer any queries during the data collection process. Participants were debriefed following their participation. All responses were screened for completeness, and incomplete questionnaires were excluded from final analysis.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to explore the relationship between subjective happiness and each well-being subscale. A standard multiple regression analysis was then performed to examine the extent to which the four dimensions of well-being predict subjective happiness. All analyses were conducted using SPSS v16, with a significance level set at  $p < .05$ .

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of SHS and Brief KAMoW Subscales (N = 100)

| Variable                 | M     | SD   | Minimum | Maximum |
|--------------------------|-------|------|---------|---------|
| Physical Well-Being      | 11.08 | 2.58 | 5.00    | 16.00   |
| Psychological Well-Being | 10.25 | 2.72 | 2.00    | 16.00   |
| Social Well-Being        | 11.31 | 2.52 | 5.00    | 16.00   |
| Spiritual Well-Being     | 11.02 | 2.76 | 4.00    | 16.00   |
| Subjective Happiness     | 5.03  | 1.21 | 1.00    | 7.00    |

### Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlations Between Subjective Happiness and Subscales of the Brief KAMoW (N = 100)

| Variable                    | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Physical Well-Being      | —     |       |       |       |   |
| 2. Psychological Well-Being | .44** | —     |       |       |   |
| 3. Social Well-Being        | .44** | .38** | —     |       |   |
| 4. Spiritual Well-Being     | .39** | .42** | .55** | —     |   |
| 5. Subjective Happiness     | .17   | .22*  | .21*  | .36** | — |

Note. Values are Pearson correlation coefficients.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Regression Analysis

A multiple regression was conducted to assess how well the four domains of well-being predict subjective happiness.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Predicting SHS from KAMoW Subscales

| Predictor                | B     | SE B | $\beta$ | t     | p      | 95% CI for B  |
|--------------------------|-------|------|---------|-------|--------|---------------|
| (Constant)               | 3.06  | 0.64 | —       | 4.76  | < .001 | [1.79, 4.34]  |
| Physical Well-Being      | 0.00  | 0.05 | .01     | 0.04  | .968   | [-0.10, 0.11] |
| Psychological Well-Being | 0.03  | 0.05 | .08     | 0.68  | .499   | [-0.07, 0.13] |
| Social Well-Being        | -0.00 | 0.06 | -.00    | -0.02 | .983   | [-0.12, 0.11] |
| Spiritual Well-Being     | 0.15  | 0.05 | .33     | 2.77  | .007   | [0.04, 0.25]  |

A standard multiple regression was conducted to examine whether the four domains of well-being—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual—predicted subjective happiness. The overall model was significant,  $F(4, 95) = 3.79, p = .007$ , accounting for approximately 13.8% of the variance in subjective happiness ( $R^2 = .138$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .101$ ). Among the four predictors, only spiritual well-being significantly predicted

subjective happiness ( $\beta = .33, p = .007$ ), suggesting that higher levels of spiritual well-being are associated with greater subjective happiness. Physical, psychological, and social well-being did not significantly contribute to the prediction when controlling for other variables. This indicates that, within the current model, **spiritual well-being uniquely explains variability** in happiness beyond the other domains.

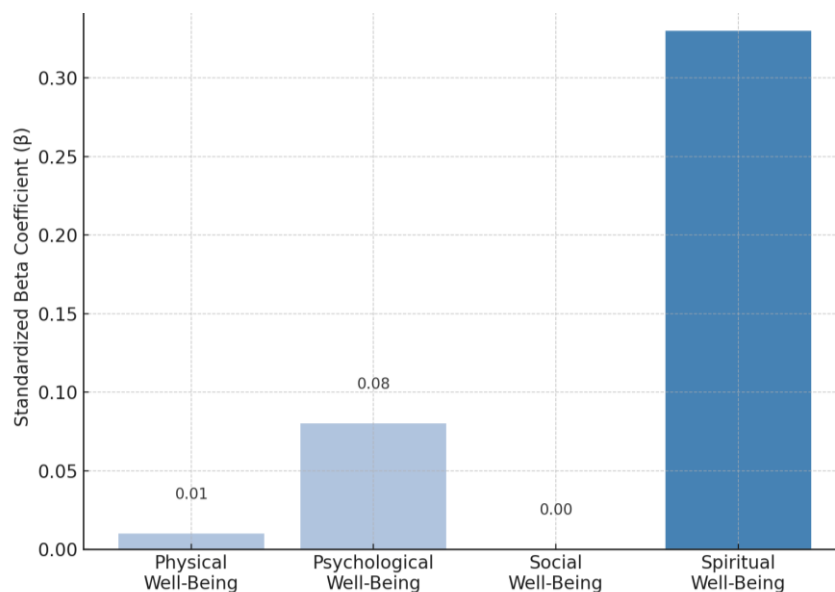


Figure 1: Standardized Beta Coefficients for Predictors of Subjective Happiness

### Discussion

This study examined the relationship between subjective happiness and multidimensional well-being using the Brief KAMoW scale, which measures four domains: physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. The results revealed that spiritual well-being was the strongest and only significant predictor of subjective happiness when controlling for other types of well-being. This suggests that individuals who feel spiritually fulfilled are more likely to report higher levels of happiness.

The findings partly confirmed the original hypothesis. As predicted, all four dimensions of well-being—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual—showed positive correlations with subjective happiness, supporting the expectation that greater well-being in any domain is generally associated with higher happiness. However, the hypothesis that **psychological and social well-being would be the strongest predictors** was **not supported**. In the multiple regression analysis, **only spiritual well-being emerged as a significant**

**predictor** of subjective happiness when controlling for the other domains. This suggests that, while several aspects of well-being are linked to happiness at a general level, spiritual well-being may play a more central and unique role in explaining individual differences in subjective happiness within this sample.

This finding aligns with previous literature that highlights the role of spiritual well-being in life satisfaction and emotional resilience (Diener et al., 2018; Koenig, 2012). Spirituality often provides individuals with a sense of purpose, connection, and meaning, all of which are known contributors to psychological well-being and happiness (Emmons, 2005). The non-significant predictive role of physical, psychological, and social well-being, although correlated with happiness at the bivariate level, indicates that spiritual well-being may uniquely contribute to subjective happiness beyond other domains.

One possible explanation for this result lies in the cultural context of the sample, which may place a higher value on spiritual or religious engagement

as a source of inner peace and fulfillment. Prior research has shown that in collectivistic and religious societies, spiritual beliefs are strongly associated with positive affect and life satisfaction (Joshanloo & Ghaedi, 2009).

Additionally, it is possible that while physical, social, and psychological well-being are essential for day-to-day functioning, they may not independently predict deeper, more enduring states of happiness unless accompanied by a sense of spiritual alignment. This distinction supports models of well-being that emphasize self-transcendence and existential meaning, such as Seligman's PERMA model and Maslow's updated hierarchy of needs.

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that well-being interventions aimed at increasing happiness may benefit from integrating spiritual components, such as mindfulness, gratitude practices, or meaning-centered therapy. Educators, counselors, and policymakers should consider the role of spirituality not just as a private belief system but as a public health resource that promotes resilience and life satisfaction.

#### Limitations and Future Directions

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which precludes conclusions about causality. Additionally, self-report measures may be influenced by social desirability or response biases. Future research should explore these relationships using longitudinal designs and consider moderating variables such as religiosity, cultural background, or age. Including qualitative data may also reveal nuanced dimensions of well-being and happiness that are not easily captured by quantitative scales.

#### REFERENCES

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104\\_01](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01)
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(3), 542–575. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.95.3.542>
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(2), 276–302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.125.2.276>
- Joshanloo, M., & Ghaedi, G. (2009). Cultural differences in the structure of happiness: The case of Iran. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10(3), 329–349. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-007-9081-4>
- Keyes, C. L. M., & Waterman, M. B. (2003). Dimensions of well-being and mental health in adulthood. In M. H. Bornstein, L. Davidson, C. L. M. Keyes, & K. A. Moore (Eds.), *Well-being: Positive development across the life course* (pp. 477–497). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Khatri, S. S. (in progress). Development and validation of the Brief Khatri-Anila Measure of Well-Being (Brief KAMoW) [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Department of Psychology, University of Karachi.
- Koenig, H. G. (2009). Research on religion, spirituality, and mental health: A review. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54(5), 283–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/070674370905400502>
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 46(2), 137–155. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006824100041>
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131(6), 803–855. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803>
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(5), 603–619. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.5.603.50748>

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141-166.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141>
- Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719-727.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719>
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press.
- Steger, M. F., Oishi, S., & Kashdan, T. B. (2009). Meaning in life across the life span: Levels and correlates of meaning in life from emerging adulthood to older adulthood. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(1), 43-52.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760802303127>

