

PART I:

INTRODUCTION

Part I involves three chapters. The first chapter serves to introduce the reader to concepts and distinctions in the psychology of quality of life, concepts such as happiness, life satisfaction, positive and negative affect, and subjective well being. Specifically, the first chapter focuses on basic definitions of subjective quality of life. Distinctions are made among related concepts of subjective well being, life satisfaction, happiness, and positive and negative affect. I describe studies showing distinctions among these concepts and show how the literature leads us to believe that subjective well being may be an umbrella concept capturing experiences and evaluations related to happiness and depression. That subjective well being involves both positive and negative affect as well as affective and cognitive experiences.

The second chapter focuses on measures of subjective well being. The chapter allows the reader to appreciate the concept of subjective well being by understanding how quality-of-life researchers have measured it over the past several decades. I group these measures into two camps, namely reflective and formative indicators of subjective well being. Reflective indicators are measures designed to capture subjective well being globally, totally, and holistically. In contrast, formative indicators of subjective well being capture the behavioural phenomenon by capturing its “causes” or “determinants”.

Chapter 3 is an attempt to provide the reader with an understanding of the motives underlying subjective well being. I have tried to show why people are motivated to optimise their subjective well being. I started out the chapter with a definition of subjective well being as satisfaction of developmental needs through participation in salient life domains. This satisfaction is reflected in a value-laden belief about the totality of one’s life. Thus, those who are more successful in satisfying their developmental needs are likely to experience greater happiness and life satisfaction than those who are less successful. Happy people tend to be successful in organising their lives in manageable domains. They participate actively in these domains to generate satisfaction within those domains. The underlying motive is to increase positive affect but not to exceed an upper threshold and prevent negative affect from sliding below an intolerable lower level. Therefore, people tend to enhance subjective well being, not maximise it. In optimising subjective well being, they use different *inter-domain* strategies