

A Comparative Study on Life Satisfaction and Well-Being Among the Residents of Urban and Rural Communities

Tanika Adhikari^{1*}, Dr. Soni Kewalramani²

ABSTRACT

Life satisfaction is an individual's subjective evaluation of their life, assessing how well it fulfills their aspirations, objectives, and expectations. It is influenced by factors like relationships, happiness, financial stability, personal accomplishments, and health. Well-being is an umbrella term that includes not only life satisfaction but also other aspects of a person's physical, mental, and social health. Well-being is subjective, meaning it varies from person to person and is impacted by a variety of internal and external elements such as genetics, socioeconomic status, environmental circumstances, and life events. Life satisfaction and well-being can differ significantly between rural and urban areas due to various factors- access to services, economic opportunities, social networks, environmental factors, and community cohesion. This paper aims to understand the influence of these factors on the life satisfaction and well-being of people living in urban and rural areas, through a comparative study on life satisfaction and well-being among residents of urban and rural communities. A sample of 100 individuals from both urban and rural areas was selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods. The study aimed to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between life satisfaction and well-being among rural and urban communities, against the alternative hypothesis suggesting a significant difference. The test used for the data analysis was one-way ANOVA. The study found that life satisfaction and well-being are significantly higher among urban residents compared to rural ones, attributed to factors such as access to amenities, employment opportunities, transportation, education, healthcare services, entertainment, networking, and social interactions. Rural residents face challenges due to limited resources and opportunities, leading to lower levels of satisfaction and well-being. The awareness of lacking essential amenities in rural settings also contributes to increased distress among rural residents. Comparing life satisfaction and well-being helps assess the quality of life in different settings, revealing factors like access to amenities, social cohesion, economic stability, and environmental quality. It might also help in exploring interventions aimed at bridging the gap between urban and rural communities to achieve equal well-being for all.

Keywords: *Life Satisfaction, Well-Being, Comparative Study, Urban & Rural Communities, Social Disparities, Urbanization, Bridging the Gap.*

¹Student, Amity Institute of Behavioral and Allied Sciences, Amity University

²Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Behavioral and Allied Sciences, Amity University

*[Corresponding Author](#)

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Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology emerged two decades ago as a subfield of modern psychology, focusing on understanding happiness and well-being. Martin E. P. Seligman, a clinical psychologist, argued that psychology had overemphasised positive emotions and the disease paradigm, treating mental illness as a disease. He argued that the discipline has focused on treating sickness rather than developing strengths, and has not explored what causes individuals to feel joy, fulfillment, resilience, and live meaningful lives. Despite its popularity, Seligman's approach has been criticized for overemphasizing good emotions and undervaluing the importance of negative emotions and experiences. Paul T. Wong, a Canadian clinical psychologist and professor, introduced Existential Positive Psychology, which believes that experiencing pain and suffering is necessary for personal growth and beneficial emotional experiences. There are two perspectives of positive psychology: Positive Psychology 1 (Seligman's approach) and Positive Psychology 2 (Wong's approach). Positive psychology assumes that psychology has become imbalanced (Simonton & Baumeister, 2005). One of the primary goals of positive psychology is to restore psychological balance.

- To offset the negative emphasis of mainstream research and theory, it is necessary to first understand positive human actions (Sheldon & King, 2001). This is connected to the demand that psychologists overcome their reservations about the "authentic" and scientific status of positive psychology as a field.
- The second requirement is to develop a scientifically informed lexicon for defining normal human functioning, similar to how we categorize mental health conditions. If we aim to avoid illness by supporting healthy lifestyles, understanding the causes of illness is probably just as important as understanding the sources of good health.

Various attempts to define this burgeoning subject of psychology have captured the notions of positive psychology. Sheldon and King characterize positive psychology as "nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues" (2001, p. 216). This concept emphasizes psychology's lack of attention to people's daily lives, which are usually fairly positive. Positive psychology is the study of the factors and processes that promote the thriving or optimum functioning of individuals, communities, and organisations.

Well-Being

A happy and contented state with low levels of discomfort, general good physical and mental health and attitude, or a high quality of life is what the American Psychological Association (APA) defines as well-being. A key idea in positive psychology is well-being. Before Seligman, researchers like Ed Diener and Carol Ryff had talked about happiness and wellbeing. The PERMA model is one prominent and well-known paradigm in positive psychology. Seligman introduced the idea to give a more comprehensive definition and explanation of well-being.

The acronym "PERMA" represents Seligman's enumeration of the following five aspects of well-being:

- **P-** Positive Emotions: Since they enable us to savour the present, experiencing positive emotions is essential for improving well-being.
- **E-** Engagement: A developed sense of well-being depends on us participating in things that we enjoy and are good at.

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- **R- Relationship:** Since we are social beings, it is essential to our well-being that we have close, meaningful relationships with other people.
- **M- Meaning:** Even happiness may not be enough to develop a sense of well-being if we lack meaning in our lives. Dedicating ourselves to a cause or recognizing something bigger than ourselves provides a sense of meaning that cannot be replaced.
- **A- Accomplishment:** A fulfilling life requires success, reaching objectives, and improving oneself. We miss a vital component of true well-being when we lack the motivation to succeed.

Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

"Subjective Well-Being refers to people's evaluations of their lives—both affective and cognitive," according to Ed. Diener. Happiness is a key component of positive psychology. The concept of happiness is multifaceted; it encompasses seeking out simple pleasures, engaging in interests and hobbies, and making a significant contribution to society. According to Seligman, they are pleasant, good, and meaningful lives that result in authentic happiness.

The word "pleasure," or hedonism, refers to hedonic happiness. It is described in terms of experiences, with a focus on fulfilling goals and seeking enjoyment in addition to the presence of positive effects and the absence of negative ones. The pursuit of happiness and pleasure is the main objective. Within psychology, the view of well-being is expressed in the study of Subjective well-being, the only difference is that it talks about a broad view of happiness.

The word 'eudaimonia' is the Greek word for "true self." Self-actualization and self-satisfaction are the two paths that lead to this kind of enjoyment. Eudaimonic happiness is the pursuit of higher meaningful and lasting satisfaction. The emphasis on "self-actualization" in humanistic psychology and this idea are very similar. Another term for it is Psychological Well-Being (PWB).

Subjective well-being consists of three components-

- Life satisfaction
- Presence of positive affect
- Absence of negative affect

Numerous important aspects of human social life have been successfully discovered by researchers studying these components of subjective well-being as factors that might either positively or negatively impact an individual's overall life satisfaction and well-being. Diener claims that there are affective and cognitive components to subjective well-being. The frequency with which an individual experiences both happy and negative affect makes up the affective component. The mental component is life satisfaction.

Life Satisfaction

The assessment of one's life as a whole, rather than just their present state of happiness, is known as life satisfaction. Even though happiness and life satisfaction are two distinct ideas, they are sometimes used synonymously. Happiness is not nearly as consistent or long-lasting as life satisfaction. It expresses our overall perspective on life and our level of happiness.

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Life satisfaction is influenced by various elements such as relationships, employment, health, and wellness, among others. Unlike life satisfaction, subjective well-being has both emotional and cognitive components. The emotional component of subjective well-being is the frequency of both positive and negative impact, while life satisfaction is the cognitive component.

It is critical to determine whether a person's place of living affects their level of happiness and well-being. But in India, there haven't been many studies in this field. To close this disparity, 100 residents of the age group 18-25, in rural and urban areas were surveyed. The primary research questions of the study are whether a person's place of residence affects his or her life and well-being and, if so, how to increase people's levels of life satisfaction and well-being in accordance with the findings. Subjective well-being and life satisfaction, the study's two variables, can represent urban and rural residents' quality of life.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Li, C., Chi, I., Zhang, X., Cheng, Z., Zhang, L., & Chen, G. (2015). Urban and rural factors associated with life satisfaction among older Chinese adults. Aging & Mental Health, 19(10), 947-954.

The study examined life satisfaction among older people in mainland China, focusing on both urban and rural factors. Results showed that 44.1% of rural older individuals and 54.6% of urban older adults were satisfied with their lives. Factors such as financial strain, depressive symptoms, filial piety, and health service accessibility were significantly associated with life satisfaction. However, age and financial exchange with children were only associated with satisfaction among urban older adults. The findings align with previous research indicating the importance of healthcare access, financial independence, and filial piety for older people's contentment.

Olsen, J. R., et al. (2019). Are urban landscapes associated with reported life satisfaction? The study found that living near a road reduces life satisfaction. Furthermore, regions characterised largely by the absence of greenery and the presence of concrete or tarmac— industrial, commercial, public, and military zones, as well as continuous urban growth— have been linked to poorer levels of life satisfaction.

Jiayue, X., et al. (2022). Urban–Rural Differences in Subjective Well-Being of Older Adult Learners in China. Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 901969.

The study examined the differences in older learners' subjective well-being between urban and rural locations in China. It involved 2,007 older adult learners over 50, with 773 from rural areas and 1,234 from urban areas. The findings showed a significant positive correlation between their subjective well-being and senior learning. The impact of older adult learning on their well-being varied depending on the urban-rural area, indicating a significant impact of urban-rural location on their well-being.

Zhang, X., et al. (2022). Life Satisfaction of Rural-To-Urban Migrants, China. The study investigates the impact of personal growth and urbanization on the health and well-being of migrants in China. It found that those in the official sector, such as public institutions and state-owned firms, reported higher happiness levels than those in the unorganized sector or unemployment. Additionally, rural residents who moved to a newly built resettlement community were happier than those who remained in a hamlet. The study

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suggests that acclimating to urban life may increase life satisfaction by fostering communal involvement.

Xu, T., et al. (2022). Urban green space and subjective well-being of older people. The goal of the study was to determine how different urban green space characteristics might improve or satisfy older individuals' subjective demands for well-being. Urban green areas are essential and have been shown to have a major positive effect on the physical and emotional well-being of elderly people. The study emphasizes how critical it is to include urban green spaces in urban planning and public health initiatives. It can be inferred that being in nature and green spaces is crucial for improving our well-being.

Deb, S., & Okulicz-Kozaryn, A. (2023). Exploring the association of urbanization and subjective well-being in India.

Regarding subjective well-being, research on India is still mostly lacking (SWB). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to look at the relationship between people's residence and their degrees of life satisfaction and SWB in India. According to the survey, respondents who lived in cities gave their SWB scores higher than those who did not.

Comparative studies on well-being and life satisfaction between urban and rural residents are vital for understanding the impact of different environments on happiness, addressing disparities, and designing tailored interventions for social cohesion and societal progress.

Most of the studies done in this area have been based on self-report data, the respondents were asked to report their levels of well-being and satisfaction. Upon reviewing the literature, it was found that the sample of college students or people between the ages of 18 and 25 is seldom used in studies in this field that concentrate on subjective well-being. The majority of the research has been conducted on housewives, working adults, or the elderly.

Rationale

The rationale for studying how a person's place of living impacts their well-being and level of life satisfaction is multifaceted. One of the main reasons is to make a significant contribution to the fields of positive psychology and community. Specifically, recognizing disparities through a comparison of life satisfaction and well-being between people of urban and rural areas can shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities that each community faces. Understanding these differences is crucial to developing customized therapies and policies that enhance overall health. With this information, the benefits and drawbacks specific to each location can be identified to create community development plans that are appropriate for the needs at hand.

Another rationale for this study is reducing disparities. Research comparing rural and urban settings may highlight variations in the opportunities, resources, and social support systems that are accessible. By addressing these disparities, policymakers and practitioners can aim to promote equality and improve the well-being of all community members, regardless of where they live.

Additionally, this research aims to enhance community well-being by providing insights into factors influencing life satisfaction and well-being in diverse settings. The findings can guide policy development and implementation, such as increasing access to resources and

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services in underserved areas, ultimately improving the overall quality of life for community members.

Overall, the rationale for studying the relationship between the area of residence of an individual and its impact on their life satisfaction and well-being is based on the need to recognize and reduce the disparities, improve community well-being, and contribute to the field of community psychology.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

To do a comparative study of the well-being and life satisfaction among the residents of rural and urban communities.

Hypothesis

- H0- There is no significant difference between life satisfaction and well-being among rural and urban communities.
- H1- There is a significant difference between life satisfaction and well-being among rural and urban communities.

Variables

- Independent variable- Residence: Urban or Rural
- Dependent variable- Life Satisfaction and Well-being

Sample

Purposive and snowball sampling technique was used for this study. It consists of 100 rural and 100 urban participants of the age group of 18-25 years.

Tools

Scale of Positive Life Orientation (SPLLO): The PLO scale was developed by Manju Agarwal and A.K. Dalal. It is an 11-item, 4-point scale with an emphasis on the positive construction of reality. The operational definition of PLO described it as the ability of the individual to emphasize the positive aspects of a crisis, to make positive comparisons, and to maintain a positive attitude towards life in general. The PLO scale is a highly reliable scale and valid scale. The scores on the scale highly predicted positive life outcomes in several studies carried out using the scale. Internal Consistency is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Which for this particular scale was 0.86. In addition to high inter-term correlations, all item-total correlations were also statistically significant, falling in the range of 0.23 to 0.77. The test-retest reliability coefficient is quite high since it is a measure of the respondent's current life orientation and not a personality trait. The scoring for each individual is done by adding up the ratings given on each experience of PLO as indicated in the 11 items of the scale. 3 items on the scale, item numbers 2,4, and 5, are reverse-coded.

Flourishing Scale: The Flourishing Scale was developed by Ed. Diener, Derrick Wirtz, et. al. in 2009. It is a brief 8-item summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. The scale provides a single psychological well-being score. Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible).

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PWB possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.

Administration

Tests applied:

One-way ANOVA (i.e. The analysis of variance) checks if the means of two or more groups are significantly equal or different from each other. In this study, one-way ANOVA was used to find out if there was any difference between life satisfaction and well-being among the residents of urban and rural communities.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Table 1 Add Table name

LIFE SATISFACTION					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	64.980	1	64.980	3.228	.074
Within Groups	3985.800	198	20.130		
Total	4050.780	199			

Table 1.2 displays the means of life satisfaction for rural and urban groups- with the mean for the urban group being higher.

MEAN

GROUPS	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
URBAN	31.38	100	4.369
RURAL	30.24	100	4.602
Total	30.81	200	4.512

Table 2 Add Table name

WELL-BEING					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	483.605	1	483.605	4.932	.028
Within Groups	19416.550	198	98.063		
Total	19900.155	199			

Table 2.1 displays the means of well-being for rural and urban groups- with the mean for the urban group being higher.

MEAN

GROUPS	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
URBAN	42.62	100	9.530
RURAL	39.51	100	10.262
Total	41.07	200	10.000

DISCUSSION

The study's findings indicate that life satisfaction and well-being are higher in urban than in rural communities, as shown in Tables 1.2 & 2.1. These findings are supported by other research, for example, a study on life satisfaction among older adults in mainland China that focused on both urban and rural factors found that 44.1% of older adults in rural areas and 54.6% of older adults in urban areas were satisfied with their lives (Li, C., et al. 2015). Another study on rural-to-urban migrants in China found that official sector employees and

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rural residents in newly constructed resettlement communities reported higher levels of happiness than those in unorganized sectors or unemployment (*Zhang, X., et al. 2022*). In another study that focused on exploring the association between urbanization and subjective well-being, in the survey, respondents who lived in cities gave their SWB scores higher than those who did not. (*Deb, S., et al. 2023*). Urban areas typically offer a wide range of amenities and services to cater to the needs and tastes of their residents. These facilities, which provide convenience and recreational opportunities, include shopping centers, restaurants, theatres, and galleries. Urban areas also usually offer a wider variety of employment options, which contributes to the prosperity and stability of the area's economy. Access to resources and mobility are enhanced in cities with efficient transit systems, leading to an overall improvement in people's quality of life. Moreover, a greater network of educational facilities, including colleges and universities, and better options for career advancements are more common in metropolitan regions and can facilitate the development of individuals' personal and professional lives.

In another study that is contrary to the results of this paper, regions characterized largely by the absence of greenery and the presence of concrete or tarmac—industrial, commercial, public, and military zones, as well as continuous urban growth—have been linked to poorer levels of life satisfaction. (*Olsen, J. R., et al. 2019*). Rural locations offer quiet and a slower pace of life, which reduces stress when one is isolated from the hustle and bustle of the metropolis. Rural areas are known for their beautiful landscape, pure air, and availability of green spaces, all of which contribute to people's physical and mental well-being. In rural locations, close-knit communities create a sense of belonging, neighbourly assistance, and strong social connections. Yet people in rural regions have lower levels of well-being and life satisfaction, the contributing factors could be—residents of rural areas typically have fewer access points to facilities and services. The overall standard of living in rural locations can be negatively impacted by restricted access to necessary amenities including shopping malls, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and recreational spaces. Furthermore, jobs in rural areas could be more limited and concentrated in particular sectors like small-scale manufacturing or agriculture, which would cause economic instability and decrease living standards for residents.

Most of the respondents from rural areas claimed that poor educational and career opportunities were the main reasons why they moved to metropolitan cities. Another reason why people are unhappy or dissatisfied in rural areas could be that they are conscious of what they lack, which generates a great deal of distress. Nowadays, through the internet, everyone knows about what is around the world. Also, this could be one of the main reasons individuals migrate from rural to urban areas and leave their homes abandoned is that people in rural areas are aware of the facilities that are readily available in metropolitan and developing cities that can make one's life simpler.

Limitations

Some of the respondents were uncomfortable with the questionnaire's language, so I had to translate the questions for them. When a questionnaire is translated, it might be difficult to ensure translation accuracy. Language barriers may cause respondents to provide comments that they assume the researcher wants to hear or is suitable, rather than their genuine experiences.

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The majority of the responses were collected online, which may have influenced the quality of responses because online data gathering does not allow for rapport building or clarification. Many people fill out online forms mindlessly, which could impact research results.

CONCLUSION

- This study was conducted to understand the difference between life satisfaction and well-being among the residents of urban and rural communities.
- Through this, it can be concluded that there exists a difference between life satisfaction and well-being among the residents of urban and rural communities.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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