

## Cultural Roots of Happiness: A Psychological Exploration of Well-Being

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### ABSTRACT

This study used Martin Seligman's PERMA model to investigate psychological wellness and investigate the cultural foundations of happiness. The goal of the study was to determine whether male and female participants' ratings of wellbeing differed from one another. For the study, a quantitative correlational research approach was used. A sample of 50 participants—25 men and 25 women—were used to gather data. Five aspects of wellbeing—positive feeling, engagement, connections, purpose, and accomplishment—were measured using the PERMA Profiler. Descriptive and inferential statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and an independent samples t-test, were used to examine the gathered data. According to the findings, men had a slightly higher mean wellbeing score ( $M = 6.58$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ) than women ( $M = 6.45$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ). The independent samples t-test, however, showed that the two groups did not vary statistically substantially ( $t = 0.30$ ,  $df = 48$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). These results imply that the studied population's levels of wellbeing are comparatively similar for both genders. The study adds to the expanding corpus of positive psychology research and emphasizes the significance of comprehending wellbeing from a cultural and psychological standpoint. In order to have a better comprehension of the cultural influences impacting happiness and wellbeing, future study may examine bigger and more varied populations.

**Keywords:** *Gender Differences, Positive Psychology, PERMA Model, Happiness, and Wellbeing*

### Concept of Happiness

Happiness is a major objective in today's society; most people want to live happy lives, and as citizens, they frequently support laws aimed at making more people happy. As a result, there is an increased need to understand happiness. There are several ways to use the term "happiness." It is a catch-all phrase for anything positive in its broadest definition. In this context, it is equivalent with "wellbeing" or "quality of life" and refers to both individual and social well-being. This page focuses on the more correct sense of the phrase, which is subjective enjoyment of life. Veenhoven provides a more thorough explanation of this term (1984: 22–25; 2000) (Veenhoven, 2012c). The human urge for intimate connection, friendships, and group affiliation is acknowledged by the relationship dimension. An existential feeling of purpose, such as when one acts for the good of something or someone

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other than oneself, is referred to as meaning (Paterson et al., 2026). Because the data captures at least some aspects of people's emotional states, they are an appropriate research topic. Subjective well-being is linked to people's health outcomes, neurological functioning, and personality, as well as predicting future behavior (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). Life pleasure has been found to be strongly correlated with social support and self-esteem (Matud et al., 2014).

### Cultural perspective of Happiness

Happiness is what each person considers to be their own happiness; it may be disastrous for humanity if everyone decided what happiness should be. For this reason, it is not appropriate to let reason determine what happiness is; hence, it is not appropriate to try to define it objectively (Blumberg, 1987: 216) (Hommerich & Klien, 2012b).

A total of 28 research looked at how happiness is affected by physical health. Participants ranged in age from 5 to 100 and hailed from 44 countries, including Africa, Canada, 15 European countries, the Far East, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, India, Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Palestine, Poland, South America, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Additionally, the majority of participants in these research were men (55% male, 45% female). Nine studies demonstrated a decline in happiness due to various physical health determinants, including poor health, disability, handicap, abuse, aging, disfigurement, transition to adulthood, older transgender youth, perceived illness, and health issues. Sixteen studies found that a number of physical health characteristics, including regular physical activity, overall physical health, parental health, a healthy diet, health insurance, cochlear implantation surgery, and home dialysis, improved happiness. A study conducted by a team of academics revealed a connection between overall happiness and general health. Similarly, a positive relationship between happiness and health was established. Better levels of happiness were linked to physical activity, and it was shown that increasing the amount of physical activity was linked to better levels of happiness. People who engage in greater physical activity are happier, according to another study. Additionally, a research discovered that regular exercise was linked to higher levels of contentment. Under adverse social comparisons, Mastery-approach objectives were shown to be more effective than performance-approach goals in terms of task performance satisfaction (Singh et al., 2023b).

Certain regions of the globe place a higher importance on the pursuit of personal happiness than others. Beyond this, different socio-cultural situations have distinct cultural interpretations of happiness. This component of culture is undeniably present, especially when national states attempt to unite their diverse people into a unified entity through their educational curriculum and patriotic exhortations (Hall, 1992: 291-99). It does not, however, exhaust culture in the modern world. According to anthropologists, culture is no longer limited to the manner of life of members of one civilization in comparison to members of other cultures. Furthermore, we are gradually selecting different components of our particular cultures in a global cultural marketplace (Mathews, 2012a). Given the global cultural marketplace, a person's culture is no longer a good indication of their spiritual views. This is also true in a number of other areas, such as their choice of sexual partners and their taste in music and art. Each of us choose from a wide range of global options, and our individual identities are formed as a result.

Naturally, this is untrue when it comes to one's mother tongue and ingrained, sometimes unconscious cultural standards— Bourdieu defines habitus as the fundamental laws that lead

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us to remake the social milieu that molded us in our own image. These characteristics of "A people's manner of living" persist throughout an individual's lifetime. As I've mentioned, contentment in this way mostly lies in the field of individual psychology, which takes into consideration all the different genetic and environmental elements that have molded a certain person. On this basis, however, It also has to do with the cultural supermarket: how people have picked a variety of cultural choices that have shaped their pleasure based on deep, accepted cultural molding; moreover, it has to do with the social environments in which people live, which review and comment on people's choices (Mathews, 2012a). Another definition of happiness is the appreciation of life in its whole, highlighting the challenges posed by problems like poverty, loneliness, and disease. However, some research links happiness to greater levels of social, emotional, and physical well-being (Salavera & Usán, 2021).

### ***Gender and Happiness***

Based on difficult life situations and early trauma, several research found correlations between age and overall happiness. According to certain research, there is no discernible disparity in children's levels of happiness, adolescents, and adults. A U-like association between pleasure and aging was discovered in another study that examined how each person's level of happiness was influenced by their age. Research also revealed a pattern between early adulthood and midlife on the happiness curve, demonstrating that older adults who had gone through traumatic experiences as children as opposed to following the transition to adulthood had lower levels of subjective happiness as they grew older. Joy with aging was found to be negatively correlated with a past-negative time viewpoint. According to a research, younger patients were happier than older transgender youngsters. Reduced happiness with low levels of health satisfaction was significantly impacted by being younger, widowed, or divorced, as well as by high levels of stress. Only in the wealthiest countries did eudaimonia and hedonic happiness stay comparatively consistent throughout life, according to another study. This demonstrated how factors play a part in the connection between happiness and age (Singh et al., 2023c). Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) suggest that it may be more difficult for women than men to achieve and retain the same degree of enjoyment in a variety of domains, including "satisfaction at work" and "satisfaction at home". Women's average happiness may have declined due to their failure to manage work and family duties, making it hard for them to be happy in both areas at the same time. However, it is probable that men and women have different ideas about what happiness is and how to achieve it. This topic is explored in the context of customers in the current study (Brakus et al., 2022). Globally, women are more likely than males to be victims of violence, have less rights, get worse representation, and face discrimination (UN Women and others, 2015) (Montgomery, 2022). Physical and mental health outcomes are strongly inversely correlated with social standing (Malhotra & Shah, 2015). In terms of social marginalization and financial consequences, mental illnesses have a significant impact on society, affecting not only the afflicted individuals and their families but also social and professional settings (Kim & Cho, 2020).

### ***PERMA Model***

Happy situations are often associated with pleasant feelings. Seligman questions whether positive feelings lead to happiness, despite the temptation to believe that happiness leads to pleasant emotions. If so, how does this affect our happiness and quality of life? (Seligman, 2011c).

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Three types of happiness are possible, according to Seligman:

- 1) Joy and satisfaction
- 2) Exhibiting Virtues and Strengths
- 3) Significance and Objective.

Although all forms of happiness are associated with good emotions, it is clear from his quotation that he saw a continuum from the first sort of happiness—pleasure and gratification—to strengths and virtues, and eventually meaning and purpose (Seligman, 2011c).

### **1. Positive Emotion: The Foundation of Well-Being**

Seligman explores the first PERMA component, pleasant Emotion, highlighting the importance of feeling pleasure. Every day, express appreciation and other pleasant sentiments. He describes how creating joy might be the first step toward a more satisfying existence.

**2. Engagement: The Flow of a Meaningful Life** Seligman examines the idea of engagement, which is giving oneself over to activities that offer a feeling of flow and immersion. He talks on how a sense of purpose and wellbeing may result from doing things that play to one's interests and skills.

**3. Relationships:** As a crucial element of the PERMA model, Seligman emphasizes the significance of good interactions. He highlights the importance of connections in boosting general well-being and discusses how fostering meaningful relationships and creating solid social ties lead to a happy existence.

**4. Meaning: Discovering Purpose in Life:** Seligman addresses the importance of discovering meaning and purpose in life under this heading, examining how a more contented and significant life might result from matching one's values and goals with a sense of purpose.

**5. Accomplishment: Striving and Achieving Goals:** Seligman shows how a sense of accomplishment and general well-being are enhanced by establishing and accomplishing objectives that are consistent with one's values and skills. Flourish broadens the concept of wellbeing by incorporating the idea and significance of success and claiming that the term of happiness is not precise enough to convey the complexity of wellbeing, even if it reiterates many of the main ideas of his first best-selling book, *Authentic Happiness* (Seligman, 2011c).

In the contemporary cultural environment, few research have used the PERMA paradigm to examine gender differences in wellbeing.

### ***Hypothesis***

According to Martin Seligman's PERMA Model of wellbeing, there is a notable difference in the psychological wellbeing of male and female individuals.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

In order to investigate psychological wellness and potential gender disparities in happiness, the current study used a quantitative research approach. In order to assess the wellbeing

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levels of male and female participants, the study used a comparative research methodology. A structured questionnaire based on Martin Seligman's PERMA Model was used to gather data. Positive feeling, engagement, connections, purpose, and accomplishment are the five main elements of wellbeing that this paradigm assesses. The gathered data was analyzed utilizing statistical techniques like independent samples, mean, and standard deviation estimation.

### *Participants*

There were 50 individuals in the sample for this study, 25 of whom were men and 25 of whom were women. Convenience sampling was used to choose the participants. Participants in the research freely came from a variety of backgrounds. The subjects were chosen in order to investigate potential disparities in psychological wellness between genders.

### *Measures*

The PERMA Profiler, which is based on Martin Seligman's wellbeing theory, was used to evaluate psychological wellbeing. Five essential elements of wellbeing are evaluated by the PERMA Profiler:

Positive Feelings, Involvement, Connections, Significance, and Success (Seligman, 2011c). Using a rating scale, participants answered a number of items pertaining to these aspects. Higher psychological wellness was reflected by higher scale scores.

### *Procedure*

An online survey sent via Google Forms was used to gather data for this investigation. After being made aware of the study's objectives, participants were requested to freely participate. The PERMA model's five components of wellbeing were covered in the questionnaire. The data were arranged and scored in accordance with the PERMA scoring rules following the collection of the replies.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to examine the gathered data. To find the average degree of wellbeing among participants, the mean and standard deviation were computed. In order to determine if there was a significant difference in psychological wellness between male and female participants, an independent samples t-test was also used.

## **RESULTS**

Male and female participants' psychological wellness was assessed using descriptive statistics. Male individuals had a slightly higher mean wellbeing score ( $M = 6.61$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) compared to female participants ( $M = 6.45$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ). The study employed an independent samples t-test to ascertain if the wellbeing of male and female participants differed significantly. According to the data,  $t(48) = 0.38$ ,  $p > .05$ , the difference was not statistically significant.

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Psychological Wellbeing Scores by Gender*

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	25	6.61	1.46
Female	25	6.45	1.50

**Table 2: Samples t-Test Comparing Wellbeing Scores between Male and Female Participants**

Variable	Male Mean	Female Mean	t	df	p
Psychological Wellbeing	6.61	6.45	0.38	48	>.05

## DISCUSSION

The current study used Martin Seligman's PERMA Model to investigate psychological wellness and any gender disparities in happiness. The findings showed that, although the difference was not statistically significant, male individuals had a little higher mean level of wellbeing than female participants. This implies that the sample's psychological wellbeing levels were comparatively equal for men and women.

Subjectively speaking, positive psychology focuses on pleasant sensory experiences, including pleasure and flow in the now, hope and optimism for the future, and well-being, contentment, and satisfaction in the past (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Many individuals spend a lot of time indoors in today's industrialized environment. Engaging in a variety of outdoor activities might offer beneficial chances to enhance health (Sher, 2003). Gender disparities in psychological wellbeing have also been investigated in earlier research, which discovered variances in wellbeing measures between male and female individuals (Waghmare, 2017).

Overall, by using the PERMA framework to examine gender variations in happiness, the current study adds to the expanding corpus of research on psychological wellness. The results emphasize the need of taking into account larger psychological and cultural aspects when examining happiness and imply that there may not be a substantial difference in wellbeing between males and girls.

### Limitations

It is critical to note the current study's limitations when evaluating the findings. First, with only 50 participants, the study's sample size was rather modest. Results of psychological wellness might be more dependable and broadly applicable with a bigger sample size. Second, convenience sampling was used to choose the participants, which might limit the sample's representativeness and the findings' applicability to a larger population.

Another drawback is that self-report questionnaires were used to gather the data, which might have been impacted by individuals' social desirability or personal biases. Instead of expressing their actual emotions or experiences, participants may reply in a way they think is socially acceptable.

Furthermore, the study ignored other significant variables that may affect happiness and wellbeing, such as age, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, or cultural differences, and instead concentrated solely on gender differences in wellbeing. These factors might be investigated further studies will provide a more full understanding of psychological wellness. Despite these drawbacks, the study adds to the body of knowledge by analyzing psychological wellness using Martin Seligman's PERMA Model and by investigating gender disparities in happiness within the chosen population (Seligman, 2011c).

### Future Research

Future research can supplement the findings of this study in a variety of ways. First, to increase the results' ability to be generalized, bigger and more varied samples may be used in future research. A more comprehensive knowledge of psychological wellness may result

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from including people from a variety of age groups, educational levels, and socioeconomic circumstances.

Second, future studies might look at other factors including personality qualities, cultural background, social support, and life satisfaction that might affect happiness and wellbeing.

Researchers may be able to better understand how various psychological and social aspects contribute to overall wellbeing by investigating these factors. In order to investigate how social settings and cultural beliefs affect people's perceptions of happiness, researchers may also carry out cross-cultural investigations. Deeper understanding of the cultural dimensions of wellbeing and how pleasure is perceived in various civilizations would be made possible by such research.

Lastly, in order to have a more thorough grasp of wellbeing, future research may use more psychological frameworks in addition to Martin Seligman's PERMA Model. Researchers may be able to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of pleasure and psychological flourishing by combining various theoretical viewpoints.

### CONCLUSION

The current study's objective was to investigate psychological wellness and potential disparities in happiness across genders. The study evaluated many aspects of wellbeing in both male and female volunteers using Martin Seligman's PERMA Model of wellbeing. The results showed that while male participants' mean wellbeing scores were somewhat higher than those of female participants, the difference was not statistically significant. This implies that the sample's psychological wellness levels were comparatively equal for both genders. The findings demonstrate that, rather than being solely driven by gender, wellbeing is a diverse concept influenced by a variety of psychological and social factors. By analyzing wellbeing using the PERMA framework and investigating how people feel psychological wellbeing within their social environment, the study advances our knowledge of happiness. As a whole, the results show how crucial it is to consider various aspects of wellness when researching psychological flourishing and happiness.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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