

Psychological Well-being

Psychological Well-being:

The Complexities of Mental and Emotional Health

By

Lucy Matsayi Aji

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I dedicate this book to God Almighty, the source of my strength, wisdom, and inspiration. His grace has guided me through every step of this journey, granting me the resilience, patience, and determination to see it through.

Without His divine favour, this work would not have been possible. May all glory and honour be unto Him, now and always.

Lucy Matsayi Aji

“Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions.”

—Dalai Lama

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PREFACE

Psychological well-being is fundamental to human existence, shaping our thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and overall quality of life. In a world increasingly challenged by stress, uncertainty, and mental health concerns, understanding and nurturing psychological well-being has never been more critical. This book is a comprehensive exploration of the factors that contribute to mental and emotional wellness, offering insights drawn from research, theory, and practical applications.

This book delves into the multidimensional nature of psychological well-being, examining its cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioural aspects. It explores key concepts such as resilience, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, mindfulness, and coping strategies, providing readers with tools to enhance their mental wellness. Additionally, it highlights the influence of environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic factors on psychological health, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to well-being.

Written for scholars, mental health practitioners, educators, students, and anyone interested in personal development, this book bridges the gap between theory and practice. It provides evidence-based insights, real-life examples, and practical recommendations for fostering a balanced and fulfilling life. Whether you are a researcher seeking to expand your knowledge or an individual looking to improve your psychological well-being, this book serves as a valuable resource.

I am deeply grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their commitment to academic excellence and for providing the platform to share this work. Special appreciation goes to my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors whose encouragement and support have been instrumental in this journey.

It is my hope that this book not only informs but also inspires individuals to cultivate resilience, embrace positive mental health practices, and contribute to a world where well-being is prioritized.

Lucy Matsayi Aji

FOREWORD

Psychological well-being is a critical component of human development, influencing our thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and interactions with the world around us. As society continues to evolve, the need for a deeper understanding of mental wellness has never been more urgent. This book, *Psychological Well-being*, offers a timely and insightful exploration of the subject, providing a scholarly yet accessible examination of the factors that contribute to mental and emotional health.

Dr. Lucy Matsayi Aji, a distinguished researcher, counsellor, and lecturer, brings a wealth of expertise and experience to this work. Through a well-researched and engaging narrative, she unpacks the complexities of psychological well-being, examining its theoretical foundations, key determinants, and practical applications. The book presents a balanced discussion on the cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental influences that shape our psychological health. It also offers valuable strategies for individuals, professionals, and policymakers seeking to enhance mental well-being in diverse contexts.

One of the strengths of this book is its ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Dr. Matsayi skillfully integrates empirical research, real-world examples, and practical insights to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of psychological well-being. Whether you are a researcher, mental health practitioner, educator, student, or someone interested in personal development, this book serves as a crucial resource for fostering resilience, emotional balance, and overall mental wellness.

I commend Dr. Lucy Matsayi Aji for her dedication to this important subject and for contributing a work that is both academically rigorous and practically relevant. *Psychological Well-being* is a must-read for anyone committed to understanding and promoting mental health in today's world.

Prof. Naomi Nuhu Adamu

Taraba State University
Department of Counselling, Educational Psychology, and Human
Development

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First and foremost, I give thanks to God Almighty for His grace, wisdom, and strength throughout this journey. His guidance has been my source of inspiration and resilience.

I extend my profound gratitude to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for providing the platform to contribute to scholarly discourse on *Psychological Well-being*. Their dedication to academic excellence and commitment to advancing knowledge have been instrumental in bringing this work to fruition.

With heartfelt appreciation, I acknowledge my beloved husband, Bala Matsayi Aji, whose love, patience, unwavering support, and encouragement have been my pillar of strength. I truly would not have completed this process without his steadfast belief in me. His sacrifices and understanding have been invaluable in helping me excel this far.

Special thanks and love to my wonderful children, Amayindi Bala Aji, Ajimasan Bala Aji, Amahwe Bala Aji, and Amafindi Bala Aji, who endured as I laboured through the creation of this book. Their patience, encouragement, and support continue to provide me with the strength and courage to achieve more. I hope that my work through this process serves as a model of resilience, determination, and a strong work ethic—one that inspires them to pursue their future goals with confidence and dedication.

I am also deeply grateful to my family, friends, colleagues, mentors, and all those who have contributed in one way or another to the success of this book. Your insights, encouragement, and belief in this work have been invaluable.

Finally, I acknowledge the contributions of researchers and scholars whose works have shaped the discourse on psychological well-being. Their dedication to the field has provided a solid foundation for this book.

Thank you all.

Lucy Matsayi Aji

INTRODUCTION

The concept of psychological well-being has become a cornerstone of modern discussions on mental health, personal growth, and societal development. As human beings, we constantly seek a sense of balance, fulfillment, and purpose in our lives. These desires underline the essence of psychological well-being, a multifaceted state that encompasses emotional, mental, and social health. This book explores the critical components, theories, and practices surrounding this vital aspect of human existence, offering insights into how individuals and communities can foster and sustain it.

At its core, psychological well-being refers to an individual's ability to feel positive emotions, cope with stress effectively, maintain meaningful relationships, and achieve personal goals. It is not merely the absence of mental illness but rather a dynamic state of thriving in various dimensions of life. Factors such as self-acceptance, autonomy, resilience, and purpose significantly contribute to psychological well-being. This book delves into these components, providing an in-depth understanding of how they interact to shape a person's mental health and quality of life. Historically, the concept of psychological well-being has been explored through various theoretical frameworks. From Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which highlights self-actualization, to Carl Rogers' person-centered approach, emphasizing self-concept and growth, psychologists have developed diverse perspectives on what it means to live a fulfilling life. In recent years, positive psychology, led by scholars like Martin Seligman, has shifted the focus from merely addressing mental illness to cultivating strengths, virtues, and positive emotions. This book synthesizes these perspectives, presenting a comprehensive view of psychological well-being.

One of the critical areas of focus in this book is the interconnectedness of psychological well-being and physical health. Research consistently shows that individuals with higher levels of psychological well-being tend to have lower risks of chronic diseases, stronger immune systems, and longer life spans. This underscores the importance of nurturing mental health as a cornerstone of holistic wellness. Moreover, societal factors such as culture, socioeconomic status, and access to resources play significant roles in shaping an individual's psychological well-being. By examining these

influences, the book provides a nuanced understanding of the broader context in which mental health is experienced. Another crucial aspect discussed in the book is the role of interventions and strategies in promoting psychological well-being. Techniques such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), stress management, and fostering gratitude have been scientifically validated as effective tools for enhancing mental health. The book also highlights the importance of community support, workplace wellness programs, and educational initiatives in creating environments that prioritize psychological well-being.

This book is designed for a broad audience, including students, researchers, counsellors, and anyone interested in understanding and improving their mental health. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical applications, it aims to empower readers with the tools to cultivate psychological well-being in their own lives and support others in doing the same. Psychological Well-being is more than a scholarly exploration; it is a guide to living a balanced, meaningful, and thriving life. As you journey through its chapters, you will gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of mental health and the profound impact it has on every aspect of human existence. Let this book inspire you to embark on a path toward greater self-awareness, resilience, and fulfillment, contributing not only to your personal growth but also to the well-being of society as a whole.

CHAPTER ONE

FOUNDATIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The foundations of psychological well-being lie in understanding the intricate factors that contribute to a balanced, fulfilling, and meaningful life. Psychological well-being (PWB) is not merely the absence of psychological distress or mental illness—it is a state in which individuals thrive emotionally, mentally, and socially. It encompasses positive functioning, resilience, life satisfaction, self-realization, and a sense of purpose. As one of the key constructs in psychology, especially in human development and counselling, PWB reflects the core of human flourishing.

The exploration of psychological well-being is rooted in foundational psychological theories and empirical frameworks, including Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Carl Rogers' person-centered theory, and Carol Ryff's multidimensional model of well-being. These models collectively emphasize the dynamic interplay between internal dispositions and external circumstances. In this chapter, we delve into the historical origins, theoretical frameworks, key dimensions, and contemporary relevance of psychological well-being, demonstrating its centrality to mental health and human development.

The foundations of psychological well-being lie in understanding the factors that contribute to a balanced and fulfilling life. Psychological well-being encompasses emotional stability, positive relationships, resilience, and a sense of purpose, reflecting not just the absence of mental illness but a thriving mental state. It highlights the interplay between personal traits, environmental factors, and social contexts. This chapter explores the core principles, dimensions, and historical evolution of psychological well-being, offering a foundational perspective on how individuals can cultivate and sustain mental and emotional health.

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sense of purpose, reflecting not just the absence of mental illness but a thriving mental state. Rooted in theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Ryff's dimensions of well-being, it highlights the interplay between personal traits, environmental factors, and social contexts. This chapter explores the core principles, dimensions, and historical evolution of psychological well-being, offering a foundational perspective on how individuals can cultivate and sustain mental and emotional health.

Definition of Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being refers to a state of mental and emotional health in which individuals experience positive emotions, engage in meaningful relationships, and effectively manage life's challenges. It extends beyond the absence of mental illness, emphasizing personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and the ability to navigate adversity with resilience. Psychological well-being is a dynamic process that integrates emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions to foster overall life satisfaction and fulfillment.

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Psychological well-being refers to a state of emotional and mental health characterized by positive affect, life satisfaction, self-realization, and the capacity to manage life's adversities constructively. It extends beyond the mere absence of disease and incorporates psychological strengths and virtues that contribute to optimal functioning. PWB integrates cognitive, emotional, and social components of life and varies across developmental stages and socio-cultural contexts.

Winefield, Gill, Taylor, and Pilkington (2012) conceptualize psychological well-being as a composite of positive emotional states, such as happiness (from a hedonic perspective), and optimal functioning in individual and social domains (from a eudaimonic perspective). Their definition implies that well-being is both affective and functional—a dual focus that has since shaped modern therapeutic and developmental paradigms.

In clinical, counselling, and educational settings, psychological well-being provides a critical baseline against which emotional disturbances and mental health interventions are assessed. According to Deci and Ryan (2008), well-being can be understood as living fully and authentically—a life characterized by the fulfillment of basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This process-oriented view of well-being affirms that individuals continually strive for personal growth and authenticity rather than mere pleasure.

Ryff (1989) contributes significantly to this field with a multidimensional model defining PWB through six key elements: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Each dimension reflects a different aspect of optimal psychological functioning and together they offer a comprehensive understanding of well-being.

It is usually conceptualized as a combination of positive affective states such as happiness and optimal effectiveness in individual and social life. It plays a crucial role in theories of personality and development, both in theoretical and practical applications. Psychological well-being provides a baseline from which we assess mental health and psychopathology. The general quality of well-being refers to optimal psychological functioning and experience. The benefits of fully understanding psychological well-being and its importance in understanding human behaviour are substantial.

Early psychological theorists such as Freud, Jung, Bandura, Erikson, and Piaget have all contributed to the development of psychological well-being, either explicitly or implicitly. Though the formal study of psychological well-being is relatively recent, its conceptual roots can be traced far back in history. Theories have emerged that view psychological well-being as a learned behaviour, where reinforcement of self-efficacy, achievement, and social validation leads to increased well-being. This implies that understanding and enhancing psychological well-being is essential in understanding human behaviour.

Psychological well-being has been described as a dynamic concept that includes subjective, social, and psychological dimensions as well as behaviours that promote health. It also includes the development and functioning of mental abilities such as perception, memory, and awareness of one's environment. While some believe psychological well-being can be measured through the absence of mental or emotional disturbances, this perspective may overlook the reality that all individuals experience some

form of psychological fluctuation. Still, many people report a favourable level of psychological well-being despite occasional disturbances.

Living a deeply satisfying life is another aspect of psychological well-being. It is not merely an end state but a continuous process of self-actualization. It entails experiencing happiness, feeling supported, and managing psychological and sociological situations with confidence and capability. This includes life satisfaction, self-worth, being cared for, and being able to handle emotional challenges. Psychological well-being is an evolving journey toward personal development, requiring effort, growth, and persistence, even when it is uncomfortable.

Individuals with high psychological well-being often exhibit positive relationships with others, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, life purpose, and personal growth. These components underscore the need for personal introspection, emotional regulation, and a commitment to goals. Understanding psychological well-being requires attention to how people relate to their life goals, their awareness of personal potential, the quality of their interpersonal relationships, and their overall life satisfaction.

Psychological well-being transcends a simplistic definition of merely being illness-free. It is a comprehensive system that involves thoughts, emotions, behaviours, relationships, and life contexts. Six dimensions are commonly associated with optimal psychological health: self-acceptance, quality relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth. These dimensions form the foundation for mental and emotional flourishing.

In addition to these core dimensions, several other constructs support psychological well-being. These include a sense of coherence, self-efficacy, life satisfaction, optimism, resourcefulness, constructive thinking, emotional intelligence, coping mechanisms, social support, reality orientation, self-actualization, resilience, and hope. These attributes interact to create a holistic picture of well-being.

Self-acceptance involves acknowledging and embracing all aspects of oneself, including strengths and weaknesses. It allows individuals to experience peace with who they are and build emotional strength. Positive relationships enable connection, empathy, and belonging, which are critical to emotional stability. Autonomy empowers individuals to make independent decisions and express their values without undue external influence. Environmental mastery reflects the ability to manage life's

complexities effectively, and having a sense of purpose gives life direction. Personal growth emphasizes continuous learning and evolving into a better version of oneself.

Psychological well-being is also context-sensitive. Social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors influence it in unique ways. For example, a supportive community can enhance well-being, while chronic stress from poverty or conflict can undermine it. Understanding this contextual aspect is crucial when designing interventions and supports that promote mental health.

Over the past few decades, interest in psychological well-being has grown significantly, particularly due to its correlation with other mental health variables such as stress, resilience, motivation, and overall wellness. A person experiencing positive emotions, even amidst challenges, tends to enjoy better physical health, more satisfying relationships, and greater achievement motivation. High psychological well-being is associated with being able to bounce back from setbacks, remain hopeful in adversity, and continue pursuing goals with determination.

In contemporary society, psychological well-being is recognized as one of the most important aspects of life quality. It is fundamental to productivity, healthy relationships, and positive societal contributions. As individuals become more aware of the need for emotional self-care and mental strength, psychological well-being becomes a central concept in education, health care, and community development.

Modern understanding of psychological well-being calls for integrative approaches that combine emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social strategies. Techniques like mindfulness, cognitive restructuring, journaling, social engagement, and values clarification have been widely used to improve well-being. Developmental interventions, such as life skills training, counselling, and psycho-educational programmes, further support individuals in building skills that enhance their emotional and psychological capacity.

Psychological well-being is also relevant across the lifespan. Children and adolescents need nurturing environments to build self-esteem and emotional intelligence. Adults require meaningful work, supportive relationships, and opportunities for self-improvement. Older adults benefit from social inclusion, physical activity, and a sense of legacy and reflection. At every stage, psychological well-being is essential for a fulfilling life.

As society continues to evolve, new challenges arise that affect psychological well-being, including rapid technological change, economic uncertainty, social fragmentation, and shifting family structures. These dynamics demand new coping mechanisms and a stronger emphasis on emotional resilience. It is important to continually adapt strategies to meet the changing needs of individuals and communities.

Overall, the foundations of psychological well-being encompass a rich interplay of personal attributes, social relationships, cultural context, and environmental influences. It is a journey of self-discovery, growth, and connection. Emphasizing strengths rather than weaknesses, it encourages individuals to strive for balance, embrace change, and nurture a fulfilling life.

By cultivating self-awareness, building strong social networks, engaging in meaningful pursuits, and nurturing a positive outlook, individuals can strengthen their psychological well-being. As this area continues to gain attention in research and practice, it promises to contribute significantly to the understanding and enhancement of human life, helping people not just to survive, but to truly thrive.

According to Winefield, Gill, Taylor, and Pilkington (2012), Psychological well-being is usually conceptualized as some combinations of positive affective states such as happiness (the hedonic perspective) and functioning with optimal effectiveness in individual and social life (the eudaimonic perspective). Psychological well-being is among the most central ideas in counselling. It plays a crucial role in theories of personality and development in both pure and applied forms; it provides a baseline from which we assess psychopathology. Psychologists and health professionals (Deci & Ryan, 2008) have studied well-being extensively. While the distinct dimensions of well-being have been debated, the general quality of well-being refers to optimal psychological functioning and experience. The benefits that can be accrued from fully understanding psychological well-being and the important part psychological well-being plays in the understanding of human behaviour cannot be over-emphasized (Oishi, Diener, Choi, Kim-Prieto & Choi as cited in Matsayi 2019).

Early works by psychologists, for example, Freud, Jung, Bandura, Eriksson, and Piaget among others, have all in their study depicted aspects attached to well-being, whether subjective or psychological, this aptly suggests that the study of psychological well-being has a short history but a long past. Over the years, the study of psychological well-being has been far-reaching and

several explanations have been postulated including but not limited to, behaviourists view that psychological well-being is a learned process of various forms of an individualistic view that certain psychological responses such as self-efficacy, financial success, attractiveness, etc when reinforced through external approvals in the form of praise or award, an individual exudes responses that demonstrate wellness. This asserts that psychological well-being is a crux in the understanding and explaining of human behaviour (Ryff as cited in Ibironke & Donald (2015).

Several kinds of literature have defined psychological well-being. However, the definitions by Ryff (1989) have featured in several articles (Anyanwu 2010; Michel 2010; Perez, 2012; Afework 2013; Elegbeleye, 2014; Workye 2015); Ryff defines psychological well-being as a dynamic concept that includes subjective, social and psychological dimensions as well as health-related behaviours. Psychological well-being may also be referred to as the development and functioning of mental abilities such as perception, memory, and awareness of things happening within the adolescent's environment. It has been believed for many decades that the state of one's psychological well-being can be measured or ascertained when there seems to be an absence of mental or emotional disturbances (Ryff, 1989). This assertion does not account for situational factors because; there is hardly any individual without some form of psychological or emotional interruptions. Regardless people still report a favourable level of psychological well-being.

According to Deci and Ryan (2008), Psychological well-being can be referred to as living life in a full and deeply satisfying manner. This conceptualization maintains that well-being is not so much an outcome or end state as a process, and is concerned with living well or actualizing one's human potential. According to Huppert, as cited in Ajai and Matsayi (2019), Psychological well-being is a state of affairs and a combination of being happy while psychological, and sociological situations seem under control with feelings of reported happiness, capability, satisfaction with life, feelings of one being supported and cared about. Waterman, Len as cited in Matsayi (2018), defined psychological well-being as a challenge; making effort; personal development; and striving to grow. Developmental and preventive interventions like development groups, psycho-educational programmes, and career development workgroups aim for skills increasing efficiency in certain life spaces. That is, psychological well-being means an individual's construction of concepts to develop himself to be able to feel happy. In this context, an individual should be able to delay his pain, he

should be able to do that and struggle even though psychological well-being hurts.

An individual should have a positive relationship with others; should be dominant over the environment; should accept himself and his past; should have a goal and meaning in his life; should have personal development and the ability to make his own decisions. For this reason, there is a potential tension between psychological well-being, happiness, and development. Extensive analysis of psychological well-being includes an individual's relationship with life goals; if he is aware of his potential, the quality of his relationship with others; and what he feels about his own life (Ryff & Keyes as cited in Mehmet (2013)). During the past several decades, psychological well-being has been studied in quite some depth, and it is considered to be more than merely the absence of illness, which seems to be an outmoded definition of well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008a). Psychological well-being encompasses the whole system, not just isolated aspects of wellness.

Ryff et al., (2006) distinguished six core dimensions and also developed an instrument that is now widely used by researchers interested in well-being. The theoretically derived dimensions of positive psychological health include self-acceptance, positive relations with significant others, autonomy in thoughts and actions, the mastery of one's environment and the ability to adapt to various conditions and circumstances, finding purpose in life, and ultimately person growth and development. Empirical research in the area of psychological well-being has been documenting this for decades. In their study of psychological well-being, (Wissing & van Eeden, Hansson, Hilleras, & Forsell, as cited in Yvonne (2014). highlighted several other constructs or aspects of psychological well-being. These constructs include coherence, self-efficacy, satisfaction with life, dispositional optimism, resourcefulness, constructive thinking, emotional intelligence, coping, social support, reality orientation, self-actualization, resilience, fortitude, and hope.

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Recent years have witnessed great interest in psychological well-being (PWB). This is not unexpected since PWB has shown to have correlations

with other crucial mental health variables such as stress (Clemente, Hezomi, Allahverdi, Jafarabadi, & Safaian, 2016), resilience (Sagone & De Caroli, 2014), wellness (Harris, Martin, & Martin, 2013) and achievement motivation (Nisa, Qasim & Sehar, 2017). A positive emotion which is often associated with people with high PWB was also found to benefit health (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, Dockray, & Steptoe as cited in Khairani, Shamsuddin, and Idris 2019). Every human desire a physically and mentally happy, prosperous, and healthy life.

The psychological well-being expectation in this 21st century (King and Napa, Argyle as cited in Idat Muqodas, Sunaryo Kartadinata, Juntika Nurihsan, Tina Dahlan, Syamsu Yusuf, Aam Imaddudin Universitas Pendidikan 2019) is the most defining aspect influencing a person's life quality. Psychological well-being (Bradburn, as cited in Matsayi 2018) is a representation of an individual's psychological health based on positive

Contemporary Understandings of Well-being

In contemporary psychology, well-being is recognized as both a personal experience and a social phenomenon. Scholars increasingly acknowledge that cultural, economic, environmental, and social contexts shape individuals' perceptions and experiences of well-being. For example, collectivist cultures may prioritize relationships and social harmony, while individualistic cultures emphasize personal achievement and autonomy. Psychological well-being is also seen as fluid—subject to life circumstances and cognitive appraisals. The hedonic and eudaimonic approaches remain dominant in the literature. While hedonic well-being focuses on happiness and pleasure, eudaimonic well-being emphasizes meaning, virtue, and actualization of potential.

Recent frameworks integrate these approaches. For instance, Seligman's PERMA model (2011) includes Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment as pillars of well-being. This broader model demonstrates that well-being is multi-dimensional, influenced by emotional, psychological, and social factors. Additionally, interventions aimed at improving PWB now span educational, clinical, and organizational settings. Practices like mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral therapy, gratitude journaling, and strengths-based coaching have all been shown to enhance aspects of psychological well-being.

Contextual Influences on Well-being

In contemporary psychology, well-being is recognized as a multifaceted construct that encompasses both individual subjective experiences and broader social realities. It is no longer viewed solely through the lens of personal happiness or clinical mental health but rather as a dynamic interplay of emotional, psychological, social, and even spiritual dimensions. This shift in perspective reflects a growing understanding that human flourishing cannot be reduced to the absence of illness or distress. Instead, well-being involves a holistic state of functioning in which individuals experience purpose, connection, fulfillment, and resilience across the various domains of life.

Modern conceptualizations of well-being are strongly influenced by the recognition that individual experiences are deeply embedded in broader contexts. Cultural, economic, environmental, and social factors shape how people define, pursue, and experience well-being. For example, in collectivist cultures—such as many found in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—well-being is often associated with harmonious relationships, group cohesion, family honor, and fulfilling social obligations. Individuals in these societies may derive a sense of wellness from interdependence and contributing to the welfare of their community.

In contrast, individualistic cultures, such as those prevalent in North America and parts of Europe, tend to emphasize autonomy, personal success, self-expression, and individual rights. In these contexts, well-being is often tied to personal achievement, freedom of choice, and self-realization. These cultural differences highlight the need for a nuanced approach to understanding well-being—one that accounts for diverse worldviews and values.

Beyond culture, socio-economic conditions play a pivotal role. People living in poverty, conflict zones, or marginalized communities often face structural barriers that impact their ability to experience well-being. Access to healthcare, education, employment, and social support systems are essential determinants. Environmental conditions such as climate, natural disasters, pollution, and access to green spaces also contribute significantly to one's well-being. Increasingly, the field acknowledges that systemic inequalities must be addressed in order to create conditions where individuals and communities can thrive.

The Fluid and Dynamic Nature of Psychological Well-being

Another central theme in contemporary understandings of well-being is its fluidity. Psychological well-being is not a fixed trait but a dynamic state that changes in response to life events, personal development, and individual perceptions. Life transitions such as adolescence, career changes, parenthood, aging, illness, and bereavement all influence how people experience well-being. Psychological flexibility—the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances, manage stress, and reframe negative experiences—is considered a critical component of sustained well-being.

Moreover, cognitive appraisals, or the ways individuals interpret and evaluate their experiences, play a key role. Two people facing similar challenges may report vastly different levels of well-being based on how they perceive those experiences. Positive self-perception, optimism, and a sense of control over one's life have been shown to buffer against stress and enhance well-being. These insights emphasize the importance of psychological processes in shaping well-being and the need for interventions that target thought patterns, emotional regulation, and coping strategies.

Hedonic and Eudaimonic Approaches

Within academic literature, two main theoretical perspectives on well-being continue to dominate: the *hedonic* and *eudaimonic* approaches.

The *hedonic* perspective, rooted in the philosophy of hedonism, defines well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance. This approach is primarily concerned with subjective well-being (SWB), which includes positive emotions, life satisfaction, and low levels of negative affect. Tools such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and measures of affect balance are commonly used to assess hedonic well-being. While this approach is important for understanding how people feel, it has been critiqued for its narrow focus on momentary happiness and lack of attention to meaning or personal development.

In contrast, the *eudaimonic* approach, which traces its origins to Aristotelian philosophy, emphasizes living in accordance with one's true self, virtues, and deeper purpose. Eudaimonic well-being is concerned with actualizing human potential and cultivating meaning, authenticity, and moral integrity. Carol Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being is a prominent example of this approach. Her model includes six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships,

purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Eudaimonic well-being invites a more enduring and developmental perspective on human flourishing.

Rather than viewing these perspectives as mutually exclusive, contemporary researchers often adopt integrative frameworks that recognize the complementary nature of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. This reflects a broader understanding that both pleasure and purpose are essential for a fulfilling life.

Integrative Models of Well-being

One of the most influential contemporary models that combines hedonic and eudaimonic elements is Martin Seligman's PERMA model (2011). Developed within the field of positive psychology, the PERMA model identifies five core components of well-being:

1. Positive Emotion – The experience of joy, gratitude, serenity, hope, and love.
2. Engagement – Being deeply absorbed or involved in meaningful activities, often leading to a state of “flow.”
3. Relationships – Having authentic connections, trust, empathy, and social support.
4. Meaning – Belonging to and serving something greater than oneself; having a sense of purpose.
5. Accomplishment – Pursuing and achieving goals, mastery, and competence.

The PERMA model provides a comprehensive framework that accommodates emotional satisfaction, personal development, social bonds, and goal fulfillment. Its applicability across different life domains—education, work, health, and therapy—has made it a valuable tool for both research and practical interventions.

In addition to PERMA, other integrated models include the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan, which highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental psychological needs. These frameworks underscore the idea that well-being is multi-dimensional and shaped by internal and external factors.

Practical Applications and Interventions

As understanding of well-being has expanded, so too has the range of interventions designed to promote it. Today, well-being is a key concern in

educational, clinical, occupational, and policy-making contexts. Positive psychology interventions (PPIs) focus on building strengths, fostering positive emotions, and cultivating meaningful goals rather than merely treating symptoms of psychological distress.

Some of the most widely researched and applied interventions include:

1. **Mindfulness-Based Interventions:** Practices such as meditation, mindful breathing, and body scans promote present-moment awareness and reduce stress, anxiety, and rumination. Mindfulness enhances emotional regulation, increases self-compassion, and contributes to greater psychological resilience.
2. **Cognitive-Behavioral Techniques:** CBT strategies target maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors, helping individuals reframe challenges and develop more adaptive coping mechanisms. CBT-based interventions are particularly effective in treating depression and anxiety and enhancing well-being.
3. **Gratitude Practices:** Exercises like keeping a gratitude journal or writing letters of appreciation help individuals shift focus toward positive experiences and cultivate a sense of thankfulness. Research shows that regular gratitude practice is associated with improved mood, increased optimism, and better physical health.
4. **Strengths-Based Coaching:** Identifying and using personal strengths—such as curiosity, perseverance, kindness, or creativity—can lead to increased self-efficacy, motivation, and fulfillment. This approach encourages individuals to align their actions with their core values and strengths.
5. **Compassion and Self-Compassion Training:** Cultivating kindness toward oneself and others fosters emotional healing and promotes interpersonal well-being. Programs like Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) aim to reduce self-criticism and enhance psychological safety.
6. **Goal-Setting and Visioning:** Encouraging individuals to set clear, meaningful goals contributes to a sense of direction and purpose. Visualization and future-oriented planning can increase motivation and perceived control over one's life.

These interventions are increasingly delivered not only in therapeutic settings but also in schools, workplaces, and community programs. For example, social-emotional learning (SEL) curricula in schools teach children skills like empathy, emotion regulation, and resilience. In

workplaces, well-being programs aim to reduce burnout, increase employee satisfaction, and improve organizational performance.

Emerging Trends in Well-being Research

Contemporary research continues to explore new frontiers in understanding and enhancing well-being. One emerging trend is the growing interest in *ecopsychology*—the study of how nature and the environment influence mental health. Spending time in natural settings, known as “green therapy” or “nature bathing,” has been linked to reduced stress, improved mood, and cognitive restoration.

Another area of growth is the exploration of *digital well-being*. As technology becomes increasingly integrated into daily life, researchers are examining how social media, screen time, and digital communication affect psychological functioning. Digital detox programs and mindful technology use are strategies being tested to mitigate negative impacts.

Additionally, *cultural and indigenous perspectives* on well-being are receiving more scholarly attention. Indigenous worldviews often emphasize harmony with nature, spiritual balance, and collective well-being, offering valuable insights that challenge Western individualistic models. Integrating diverse cultural paradigms enriches the global discourse on what it means to live well.

Finally, the concept of *post-traumatic growth*—the idea that individuals can develop greater appreciation for life, deeper relationships, and increased personal strength following adversity—is gaining recognition. This reflects a broader paradigm shift in psychology from a deficit-based model to one that embraces human potential, resilience, and transformation.

The contemporary understanding of well-being is both expansive and evolving. No longer confined to simplistic notions of happiness or the absence of illness, well-being is now conceptualized as a rich, dynamic, and context-dependent experience. It is influenced by personal attributes, cultural norms, social relationships, and broader environmental conditions. By integrating both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives, contemporary models offer a more comprehensive view of what it means to flourish.

As research and practice continue to develop, the emphasis is increasingly on proactive, strength-based approaches that empower individuals and communities to cultivate well-being. Whether through mindfulness, gratitude, cognitive restructuring, or social connection, the tools to enhance

psychological well-being are accessible and adaptable across settings and cultures. Ultimately, fostering well-being is not only a personal endeavor but a societal imperative—one that requires collective responsibility, inclusive thinking, and sustained commitment to human dignity and development.

Psychological Well-being Across the Lifespan

Psychological well-being evolves across different stages of life. In childhood and adolescence, well-being is strongly tied to supportive environments, self-esteem, and developmental milestones. During early adulthood, identity formation, autonomy, and career choices become central. Midlife often involves reflection on purpose, family, and achievements, while later adulthood focuses on life satisfaction, legacy, and coping with physical decline or loss.

Ryff & Keyes (1995) noted that older adults often report high levels of autonomy and self-acceptance, despite declining physical health. This suggests that psychological well-being can remain stable or even improve with age due to increased life experience, maturity, and emotional regulation. Moreover, the role of socio-economic conditions, gender, family structure, and cultural norms are significant determinants of psychological well-being across the lifespan. Understanding these contexts is crucial for designing effective developmental and therapeutic interventions.

Psychological well-being is not a static trait but a dynamic process that evolves across the human lifespan. At different stages of life, individuals encounter unique developmental tasks, challenges, and opportunities that shape their emotional and psychological functioning. These variations are influenced by biological maturation, social environments, personal experiences, and cultural expectations. Understanding how psychological well-being manifests and changes over time provides valuable insights for both developmental psychology and applied mental health interventions.

Childhood and Adolescence

In childhood, psychological well-being is closely linked to the presence of secure attachments, nurturing caregivers, and consistent support systems. Positive emotional development is fostered through loving relationships, safe environments, and opportunities for exploration and learning. Children who experience warmth, validation, and encouragement tend to develop strong self-esteem, emotional regulation, and resilience. Milestones such as