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# INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC DISCUSSION: PROBLEMS, TASKS AND PROSPECTS



BRIGHTON, GREAT BRITAIN 21-22.04.2021

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## **PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY**

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### **Orap Maryna**

Doctor of Psychological Sciences (Ph. D. in Sciences), Professor, Professor at the Department of Psychology, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ukraine

### Kalba Yaroslava

Candidate of Psychological Sciences (Ph. D.), Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ukraine

## SUBJECTIVE WELL – BEING IN UKRAINIAN STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-2019 QUARANTINE

Abstract. The global pandemic COVID-19 and introduced quarantine affect not only the people's health, but their psychological well-being in general. Decrease the subjective well-being at the beginning of quarantine was associated with limited communication, fear for health and limited mobility. In a year the situation has changed, there has been manifested the increasing levels of anxiety during quarantine due to awareness of the difficulties of quarantine life that associated with distance education and limited mobility, financial difficulties and uncertainty about the future. But we studied that during the first year of quarantine the level of subjective well-being has not changed significantly.

Keywords: subjective well-being, COVID-19, quarantine, students.

For the first time in world history, the global pandemic and introduced quarantine provides completely new social conditions that affect the mental health of people. Psychologists understand that the main accompanying emotional states of people in a pandemic are fear, panic, anxiety, apathy, stress and depression [1]. This is definitely international problem that is actual and common for all people [2]. Current publications focused on the first psychological aid and support to people in stress situation [2, 3]. Psychologists underlined that separation from loved ones, the loss of freedom and uncertainty over disease status during quarantine cause of raising the level of anxiety that can create dramatic effects [4]. That's why we needed theoretical and research the main factors of anxiety in a current situation and practical recommendation to improve mental health and subjective well-being during epidemics and quarantine [5].

Bradburn was one of the first who in 1969 introduced the term "psychological well-being" and identified it with a personal sense of happiness and life satisfaction. Bradburn's theoretical model of psychological well-being is about the balance which is achieved by the interaction of two types of affect – positive and negative. Bradburn reports that positive and negative affect vary independently, rather than being bipolar opposites on the same affect spectrum [6]. This suggested that positive and negative affect are produced by different processes and exhibit different degrees of relationship with other variables.

However, other researchers have continued to report a strong, inverse correlation between positive and negative affect. For example, Green et al. (1993) found the correlation between positive and negative affect to be strongly negative, controlling for random measurement error using structural equation modelling [7]. This has helped to identify another scientific paradigm for the study of subjective well-being. Scholars in this area emphasize that subjective well-being is a positive cognitive-evaluative attitude of a person to the world in general and to himself/herself as a subject of life, to others as partners in communication and interaction and experience on this basis a sense of self-satisfaction. Diener developed a tripartite model of subjective well-being, which describes how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments. Subjective well-being (SWB) therefore encompasses moods and emotions as well as evaluations of one's satisfaction with general and specific areas of one's life. Diner's idea is that a high level of subjective well-being is possible when a person generally experiences satisfaction with life and only at certain moments experiences negative emotions. On the contrary, a low level of subjective well-being implies frequent experiences of negative emotions [7].

Modern researchers pay more attention to the separation of the structure of subjective well-being and the description of all the elements that influence this integral phenomenon. Carol Ryff and Corey Keyes created a theoretical model of psychological well-being that encompasses 6 distinct dimensions of wellness – Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, Self-Acceptance [8]. Seligman's PERMA model focus on the five domains of subjective well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment [9]. As Julie Butler & Margaret Kern says, "wellbeing can be defined and measured objectively (e.g., sufficient resources to meet basic needs, opportunities for education, lack of environmental pollutants) or subjectively; we focus here on the subjective side. In the literature, terms such as "happiness", "subjective wellbeing", "thriving", and "flourishing" are often used interchangeably, and we use these terms interchangeably here" [10]. We agree with the position of the authors, because the underlying principle that well-being does not necessarily exclude negative emotions seems scientifically sound. Julie Butler & Margaret Kern in their study focus on the five domains defined by Seligman's PERMA theory: Positive Emotion (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment (A) (Seligman, 2011). Survey, made by Sheridan examined the combined influence of six positive psychology variables (optimism, hope, self-efficacy, grit, gratitude, and subjective life satisfaction), termed covitality, in relation to buffering individuals against anxiety symptoms. In addition, the influence of self-deception was examined to test whether this construct had an influence on the reporting of these positive psychology variables [11].

Data are reported from a national probability sample of Ukrainian adolescence aged  $17,52 \pm 0,39$  (M ± SD) years. A total of 240 individuals (162 females and 78 males) from Ukrainian Universities took part in the study. We chose age group "adolescence" for the study because young people are considered to be one of the most highly emotionally unbalanced. So, they are more exposed to situational anxiety. The respondents' native language was Ukrainian, however, proficiency in English at B2 level was a prerequisite. The selected test methods were used in the original form, in English. The participants completed an online questionnaire which

included a battery of positive psychological measures. Participation in this study was voluntary and completion and submission of the online questionnaire was deemed to demonstrate participant consent.

To make a conclusion about well-being in Ukrainian students we measured the level of well-being at the beginning of quarantine in Ukraine (March, 2020) and compare it with the level of well-being of the same sample of respondents after a year of quarantine – in March, 2021.

The choice of diagnostic methods was due to the methodological approaches to well-being, which we outlined as a theoretical basis for our study and analyzed above. Seligman defined well-being in terms of five pillars: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment, or PERMA [9]. According to this understanding of subjective well-being Butler and Kern developed the PERMA-Profiler as a brief measure of PERMA [10]. The PERMA-Profiler is a validated, 23 – question survey. Each statement/question is rated on 10-point scale, ranging scores from 0 (never) to 10 (always). Butler and Kern also added to Seligman's five pillars also profiles that measures health, negative emotions, loneliness and overall well-being. So, this well-being measure allows to the fullest study of individual's well-being across multiple psychological domains. That's why we chose the PERMA-Profiler for our survey.

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics of the participants' positive emotions, engagement, relations, meanings, accomplishment, health, negative emotions, loneliness and overall subjective well-being scores, based on the participant's gender at the beginning of quarantine and after a year of quarantine. An independent *t*-test revealed that there are no significant differences between females and males scores in all profiles, p < .005. This means that gender does not significantly affect the subjective well-being. That's why we didn't take this indicator into account in further measures.

As shown at the table, the most significant factors of subjective well-being of Ukrainian students at the beginning of quarantine were "relationships"  $(7.37\pm2.01)$ , "positive emotions"  $(7.34\pm1.52)$ , and "engagement"  $(7.34\pm1.30)$ . After a year of

quarantine "engagement" (7.26 $\pm$ 1.29) became the most important. We can see increasing the importance of "health" in overall subjective well-being (7.22 $\pm$ 1.77).

Table 1

	March, 2020	March, 2021	t- criteria	
n	240	232		
PE (M±SD ()	7.34±1.52	7.22±1.58	0.05	
E (M±SD)	7.34±1.30	7.26±1.29	0.18	
R (M±SD)	7.37±2.01	7.07±2.16	0.01	
M (M±SD)	6.93±1.62	$6.76 \pm 1.67$	0.03	
A (M±SD)	6.78±1.36	6.68±1.38	0.11	
H (M±SD)	7.16±1.74	7.22±1.77	0.41	
NE (M±SD)	4.73±1.86	4.94±1.87	0.01	
L (M±SD)	4.22±2.68	4.54±2.72	0.06	
WB (M±SD)	7.13±1.19	6.97±1.26	0.01	

**Respondent's PERMA-profiler scores (March, 2020; March, 2021)** 

*Note: Two sided T-test,*  $\alpha = 0.05$ *; t critical* = 1.96

*PE* - positive emotions, *E* - engagement, *R* - relationships, *M* - meanings, *A* - accomplishment, *H* - health, *NE* - negative emotions, *L* - loneliness, *WB* - overall subjective well-being.

But an independent *t*-test revealed that there are no significant differences between all profiles and the overall score of subjective well-being. This means that there were no significant changes in the level of subjective well-being during the year of quarantine, it did not become significantly lower or significantly higher and remained at the same level. We explain this by adaptation to new living conditions and the establishment of relations, by the general optimism of Ukrainian youth and with the change of life priorities during this year. Decrease the subjective well-being at the beginning of quarantine was associated with limited communication, fear for health and limited mobility. In a year the situation has changed, there has been manifested the increasing levels of anxiety during quarantine due to awareness of the difficulties and uncertainty about the future. The most important factor of subjective well-being - relationships - during the year of quarantine, of course, has changed due to limited mobility. But Ukrainian students compensated their limited physical mobility by communicating online.

Therefore, Ukrainian students concentrate on the good and they are quite optimistic. However, Ukrainian concept of well-being lacks pragmatism. Their interpretation of well-being is based on subjective indicators of positive emotions, engagement and relationships, and is less depended on objective criteria such as health or accomplishment. Therefore, the subjective well-being for a Ukrainian is first of all to feel positive emotions and to have good relationships.

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