



Well-Being Profile (WB-Pro): Creating a high quality multidimensional measure of subjective well-being to advance research and policy

Advances in the field of well-being science are currently hampered by the plethora of measures that are used, many of poor quality. There is also currently no agreement about what exactly should be measured and how it should be measured.

For psychologists, well-being is about how people experience their lives, not the objective facts of their lives, since we know that individuals may experience low well-being even if they have high socio-economic advantage and good physical health.

Why is it important to measure well-being? There is evidence that people with high levels of well-being learn more effectively, are more productive and more creative, have better relationships, and better health and life expectancy. However, the instrumental benefits of well-

being are not the main reason why well-being is important. They are merely a by-product of a high level of well-being. The real reason subjective well-being matters is that well-being is an end in itself – an ultimate good. If we want to understand the causes of well-being and how to enhance it in individuals and populations, we need clear definitions of the major components that make-up well-being and good measures of the multiple components of well-being.

How well-being is conceptualised and measured also has implications for policy. If well-being is understood as primarily about happiness, many would argue that it is not the business of government and policymakers to make us happy. On the other hand, if well-being is understood as including positive functioning, then it is very much the business of a government that cares about its citizens, to create the conditions whereby they can function to the best of their ability, for the benefit of themselves and their society.



It would be handy if a single question could measure how well we perceive our life to be going. This has been the aim of life satisfaction questions such as: "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?" Responses are typically made on a scale from 0-10, where 0 means 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 means 'extremely satisfied'. There are numerous problems with life satisfaction questions. Most people respond with a 7 or 8, it shows little sensitivity to change over time, and there is wide variation in how people weigh up different aspects of their life, and in their interpretation of the word 'satisfied'. Nevertheless, life satisfaction measures are the most widely used survey measures of well-being, and continue to be used simply because they have always been used. But we need to do better.

Even if we could construct a well-phrased single-item measure of well-being, it would not be very illuminating, since well-being is a multidimensional construct. This project seeks to develop a short, psychometrically robust measure that captures the multidimensional nature of well-being, 'WB-Pro'. The measure will be informed by leading research on well-being, current successful scales, repeat testing, and qualitative interviews to understand why people respond in certain ways. We will construct a web-based version of the WB-Pro that will be in the public domain. This will enable the instrument to be freely used by any researcher.

The dimensional profiling that will result is particularly relevant to policymakers, since knowing which dimensions of well-being are particularly impacted by government programs or demographic variables such as employment, education or neighbourhood quality, can result in more appropriately targeted policy interventions.

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Start Date: 1 January 2017

End Date: 31 December 2018

Funding Body: ACU Research Fund
