

# Study on the Relationship between College Students' Subjective Well-Being and Psychological Health

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## ABSTRACT

*Amidst the evolving dynamics of social change and globalization, university students, as a crucial demographic, confront mounting psychological pressures and trials. This study zeroes in on university students in Sichuan Province's Chengdu region, probing the nexus of happiness, psychological health, and social fairness. Delving into how social fairness moderates happiness's influence on psychological health, the research employs a quantitative methodology across 435 participants. The results affirm that heightened social fairness augments happiness's impact on psychological health in university students. This study enriches comprehension of the intricate interplay between happiness, psychological well-being, and social fairness, offering vital insights for psychological interventions.*

**KEYWORDS**;- Subjective Well-Being, Psychological Health, Social Fairness

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A With the continuous development of social transformation and globalization, college students, as a vital population in society, are facing increasing psychological pressures and challenges. The pressures in their academic pursuits, interpersonal relationships, and career development may significantly impact their psychological well-being and sense of happiness. Particularly within the context of China's higher education system, college students in the Sichuan-Chengdu region confront intense competition and interpersonal pressures, underscoring the importance of in-depth exploration into their psychological well-being. Subjective well-being (SWB), an essential dimension of individual subjective experiences, has garnered extensive attention in the field of psychological health research. College students' sense of happiness not only relates to their personal satisfaction and quality of life but is also closely tied to their psychological health. However, the relationship between college students' psychological well-being and sense of happiness is intricate and influenced by various factors. Among these, perceived fairness in society, known as social fairness, serves as a potential moderating factor and might play a pivotal role in this connection. Perceived fairness in society is subjectively evaluated by individuals regarding the allocation of resources, rights, and opportunities in the community, encompassing their perceptions of societal systems, environments, and values. Previous research has suggested a positive association between perceived social fairness and subjective well-being. However, when it comes to the domain of college students' psychological health, it remains unclear whether social fairness solely serves as a factor related to their sense of happiness or whether it potentially exerts a moderating effect on the relationship between happiness and psychological health, necessitating further in-depth investigation. In the specific context of college students in the Sichuan-Chengdu region, the interplay between perceived social fairness and psychological well-being, along with its potential moderating role, remains inadequately explored. Therefore, this study aims to explore how perceived social fairness moderates the relationship between happiness and psychological health among college students in the Sichuan-Chengdu region. By conducting an in-depth study on this specific group of college students, the research seeks to provide more accurate insights into the relationship between subjective well-being and psychological health and to offer substantial guidance and evidence for targeted psychological health interventions. In summary, this study aims to examine the moderating role of perceived social fairness in the relationship between subjective well-being and psychological health among college students in the Sichuan-Chengdu region. By delving into the relationship between happiness and psychological health, this research contributes to the theoretical knowledge in the domain of college students' psychological well-being and provides practical recommendations for tailored psychological health interventions.

## **II. Literature Review and Hypotheses**

### **Relationship between Subjective Well-Being and Psychological Health**

When investigating the relationship between subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological health, existing scholarly literature indicates the positive impact of SWB on psychological well-being. As a dimension of individuals' subjective psychological states, SWB encompasses their subjective evaluations of their overall happiness and life quality. Positive emotional states and life satisfaction, as components of SWB, are closely linked to enhanced psychological health. Studies reveal a significant negative correlation between higher SWB and lower levels of depression and anxiety symptoms (Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2012)[1]. Enhanced positive emotional experiences may contribute to mitigating depressive and anxious emotions by enhancing coping abilities and reducing psychological stress levels. Moreover, SWB is closely associated with higher self-efficacy and self-esteem, among other psychological health indicators, enabling individuals to better cope with life challenges and pressures (Diener et al., 2017)[2]. The positive influence of SWB on psychological well-being may be realized through various mechanisms, including the emotional regulation function of positive emotions. Positive emotions aid individuals in quicker recovery from negative emotions, promoting emotional balance and psychological adaptation (Fredrickson, 2001)[3]. Furthermore, positive emotions facilitate cognitive and behavioral complexity, enhancing problem-solving skills, and enabling better coping with life challenges (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002)[4]. However, it is crucial to note that the relationship between SWB and psychological health is intricate due to the multidimensional nature of psychological health, influenced by various factors. Additionally, the impact of SWB may vary based on individual differences, cultural backgrounds, and environmental factors. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between SWB and psychological health necessitates considering the interaction of multiple factors, providing ample space for future exploration. Based on the above discourse, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: College students with higher levels of SWB will exhibit higher levels of psychological health.

### **Research on Perceived Social Fairness**

Perceived social fairness is defined as individuals' subjective evaluations of the allocation of social resources, rights, and opportunities, often influenced by social systems, cultural environments, and personal values. College students, as a unique group, often confront academic pressures, interpersonal challenges, and uncertainties about future careers, factors that may influence their sense of happiness and psychological health. Building upon prior research, we posit the following hypothesis derivation: First, according to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954)[5], college students tend to compare themselves with peers or others in society to assess the fairness of their resource and opportunity allocations. In situations where relative fairness in resource distribution is perceived, college students are more likely to experience enhanced satisfaction and happiness. This aligns with research findings, such as those by Diener and Biswas-Diener (2002)[6], in their studies on SWB. Second, perceived social fairness may positively impact college students' psychological health. Equitable allocation of social resources and rights can provide psychological support and self-affirmation, enabling students to better cope with setbacks and pressures. According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)[7], in circumstances where social support and fairness are perceived, individuals are more likely to experience improved psychological health. This aligns with research results by Smith and Firat (2009) [8] regarding the positive influence of perceived social fairness on psychological health. Finally, we hypothesize that perceived social fairness moderates the relationship between happiness and psychological health in college students. Higher levels of perceived social fairness may strengthen the positive relationship between happiness and psychological health. Perceived social fairness may offer emotional support and self-efficacy to college students, empowering them to actively tackle life challenges. This moderating effect corresponds with findings from certain studies, such as the research by Aknin and Hamlin (2014)[9] regarding the moderating effect of happiness on external resource allocation. In conclusion, grounded in social comparison theory, self-determination theory, and pertinent research outcomes, we propose:

H2: Perceived social fairness positively moderates the relationship between happiness and psychological health in college students.

## **III. RESULT VIEW**

This study focuses on college students in Sichuan Province, China, employing a quantitative research approach. Subjective well-being (SWB) is referenced from the work of researchers such as Martin Seligman and Ed Diener in 2003. It aims to assess individuals' subjective feelings of happiness through a series of questions. The scale comprises four items, requiring participants to evaluate their own happiness based on their actual experiences, with each item representing a facet of well-being. For instance, statements like 'I usually feel very happy' are included. Psychological health (PH) is based on Ron Kessler's (2002) Short Version of the Mental Health Inventory, often referred to as the Kessler-10 (K10) scale. Widely used to measure the severity of

psychological distress symptoms, the K10 consists of ten questions designed to assess participants' emotional states and psychological health over the past four weeks. The scale primarily focuses on aspects like emotional problems, depression, and anxiety, providing a common and rapid tool for evaluating psychological well-being. Items include statements like 'Have you felt nervous?'. Perceived fairness in society (SPF) is assessed directly using a 1 to 5 point scale. Control variables encompass gender, age, educational level, and region, among others. Commencing in May 2023, a total of 435 questionnaires were distributed, resulting in 399 valid responses, yielding an effective response rate of 91.72%. Among the participants, 48.37% were male and 51.73% were female, with over 90% being under the age of 22. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire's reliability test was 0.84, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.79. These results indicate strong internal consistency and good validity of the questionnaire. After conducting the Harman's single-factor test to analyze common method bias, the variance explained is 27.83%, which is below the required threshold of 40%.

**Correlation Test**

After conducting the correlation analysis, it was found that there are significant correlations among all major variables. The relatively low correlation coefficients indicate the absence of severe multicollinearity issues between variables. The results are presented in the table below:

|        | gender           | age           | edu             | area            | SWB              | SPF              | PH               |
|--------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| gender | 1(0.000***)      | 0.025(0.614)  | 0.097(0.052*)   | 0.041(0.415)    | -0.236(0.000***) | -0.253(0.000***) | -0.533(0.000***) |
| age    | 0.025(0.614)     | 1(0.000***)   | -0.015(0.772)   | -0.017(0.728)   | -0.034(0.502)    | -0.003(0.947)    | -0.073(0.143)    |
| edu    | 0.097(0.052*)    | -0.015(0.772) | 1(0.000***)     | 0.183(0.000***) | 0.044(0.375)     | 0.001(0.983)     | -0.012(0.805)    |
| area   | 0.041(0.415)     | -0.017(0.728) | 0.183(0.000***) | 1(0.000***)     | 0.039(0.434)     | 0.019(0.713)     | -0.01(0.843)     |
| SWB    | -0.236(0.000***) | -0.034(0.502) | 0.044(0.375)    | 0.039(0.434)    | 1(0.000***)      | 0.176(0.000***)  | 0.579(0.000***)  |
| SPF    | -0.253(0.000***) | -0.003(0.947) | 0.001(0.983)    | 0.019(0.713)    | 0.176(0.000***)  | 1(0.000***)      | 0.302(0.000***)  |
| PH     | -0.533(0.000***) | -0.073(0.143) | -0.012(0.805)   | -0.01(0.843)    | 0.579(0.000***)  | 0.302(0.000***)  | 1(0.000***)      |

Note : \*\*\*, \*\*, \*Representing significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10% respectively.

**Table 1 (Correlation Test)**

**Test of Main Effects**

By employing hierarchical regression, the main effects were examined. In Model 1, it can be inferred that the regression coefficient (B) for SWB on PH was found to be 0.368, with a p-value of 0.000. This confirms Hypothesis 1 of the study, indicating that college students with higher levels of subjective well-being exhibit higher levels of psychological health.

In Model 3, the interaction term between SWB and SPF is positive and exhibits significance ( $t = 2.628$ ,  $p = 0.009 < 0.05$ ). This suggests that when examining the impact of SWB on PH, the moderating variable (SPF) has significant variation in the magnitude of influence at different levels. This outcome demonstrates the validation of Hypothesis 2 in this study, indicating that social fairness plays a positive moderating role in the relationship between university students' well-being and psychological health. Specifically, higher levels of perceived social fairness amplify the influence of well-being on psychological health among university students. The detailed results are presented in the table 2 below.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

This study focuses on college students in the Sichuan region of China as the research subjects and employs a questionnaire survey method. From the perspective of data results, it is evident that subjective well-being does indeed influence the psychological health of college students. In the relationship between subjective well-being and psychological health, perceived social fairness plays a positive moderating role. This implies that for contemporary college students, enhancing their subjective well-being through various means contributes to improved psychological health, with perceived social fairness serving as a positive facilitator. Future endeavors could consider further strengthening these aspects. It is important to note that the sample for this study consisted solely of data from college students in the Sichuan region of China. Subsequent research may consider broadening the geographical scope and increasing the sample size to enhance the comprehensiveness and reliability of the study.

|                         | Model 1   |                    |                          |         | Model 2   |                    |       |         | Model 3                  |                    |        |       |           |         |                          |  |  |  |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------|-------|---------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|-----------|---------|--------------------------|--|--|--|
|                         | B $\beta$ | Standard Deviation | t                        | p       | B $\beta$ | Standard Deviation | t     | p       | B $\beta$                | Standard Deviation | t      | p     | B $\beta$ |         |                          |  |  |  |
| Constant                | 4.662     | 0.114              | 41.044                   | 0.000** | -         | 4.619              | 0.113 | 40.906  | 0.000**                  | -                  | 4.592  | 0.113 | 40.816    | 0.000** | -                        |  |  |  |
| gender                  | -0.506    | 0.044              | -11.394                  | 0.000** | -0.419    | -0.473             | 0.045 | -10.510 | 0.000**                  | -0.392             | -0.468 | 0.045 | -10.477   | 0.000** | -0.388                   |  |  |  |
| age                     | -0.031    | 0.024              | -1.316                   | 0.189   | -0.047    | -0.032             | 0.023 | -1.357  | 0.176                    | -0.048             | -0.030 | 0.023 | -1.280    | 0.201   | -0.045                   |  |  |  |
| edu                     | 0.006     | 0.024              | 0.247                    | 0.805   | 0.009     | 0.005              | 0.024 | 0.202   | 0.840                    | 0.007              | 0.004  | 0.023 | 0.178     | 0.859   | 0.006                    |  |  |  |
| area                    | -0.008    | 0.022              | -0.388                   | 0.698   | -0.014    | -0.010             | 0.022 | -0.463  | 0.644                    | -0.017             | -0.008 | 0.021 | -0.369    | 0.713   | -0.013                   |  |  |  |
| SWB                     | 0.368     | 0.028              | 13.046                   | 0.000** | 0.479     | 0.357              | 0.028 | 12.709  | 0.000**                  | 0.464              | 0.363  | 0.028 | 12.979    | 0.000** | 0.472                    |  |  |  |
| SPF                     |           |                    |                          |         | 0.070     | 0.021              | 3.314 | 0.001** | 0.121                    | 0.076              | 0.021  | 3.617 | 0.000**   | 0.132   |                          |  |  |  |
| SWB*SPF                 |           |                    |                          |         |           |                    |       |         |                          | 0.068              | 0.026  | 2.628 | 0.009**   | 0.093   |                          |  |  |  |
| R <sup>2</sup>          |           |                    | 0.504                    |         |           |                    | 0.518 |         |                          |                    |        | 0.526 |           |         |                          |  |  |  |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> |           |                    | 0.498                    |         |           |                    | 0.510 |         |                          |                    |        | 0.518 |           |         |                          |  |  |  |
| F Value                 |           |                    | F (5,393)=79.963,p=0.000 |         |           |                    |       |         | F (6,392)=70.159,p=0.000 |                    |        |       |           |         | F (7,391)=62.028,p=0.000 |  |  |  |
| $\Delta R^2$            |           |                    | 0.504                    |         |           |                    |       |         | 0.014                    |                    |        |       |           |         | 0.008                    |  |  |  |
| $\Delta F$ Value        |           |                    | F (5,393)=79.963,p=0.000 |         |           |                    |       |         | F (1,392)=10.982,p=0.001 |                    |        |       |           |         | F (1,391)=6.904,p=0.009  |  |  |  |

Dependent Variable : PH

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 2 (Test of Effects)**

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