

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Modern psychological, economic, and social processes are characterized mainly by stress-producing features. Today, the psyche of a modern person is exposed to powerful negative impacts of social, psychological, man-made, natural, every day, and many other nature, which require special measures to protect mental health and strengthen it. In this context, studying and analyzing emotional well-being is becoming increasingly important. The concept and methodology of ensuring subjective well-being in the context of overcoming stress-producing effects of the external environment, highlighting the deep features of the relationship between social stability and subjective well-being, the search for practical ways are today, more than ever, on the agenda, relevant and urgent. Proof of this is scientific evidence of the transformation processes of modern societies, in which the individual, like social groups, regularly face complex and contradictory socio-psychological, economic, cultural, and civilizational processes. In such situations, manifestations characteristic of the phenomenon of anomie of personality and social groups develop and deepen, the normative system of behavior management of individuals is absent or levels out, the processes of self-realization of the individual, disclosure of personal potential, formation of a constructive attitude to reality and experience of subjective well-being are

hampered. Psychological features and emotional-evaluative components that determine the internal comfort and balance of the individual are transformed, which inevitably affects the individual's subjective well-being, behavior, and life. Based on the fact that the attention of the scientific community to the problems of subjective well-being is currently emphasized, it is becoming increasingly difficult to classify the signs characteristic of the phenomenon under study, which, in turn, leads to distortions in the general perception of subjective well-being. Therefore, the relevance of this study is due to the need to present a scientific concept of criteria formation for assessing subjective well-being.

Keywords: subjective well-being, criteria, assessing, mental health, society.

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Համառոտագիր

Ժամանակակից հոգեբանական, տնտեսական և սոցիալական գործընթացները բնութագրվում են հիմնականում սթրեսածին հատկանիշներով: Այսօր ժամանակակից անձի հոգեկանը ենթարկվում է սոցիալական, հոգեբանական, տեխնածին, բնական, կենցաղային և շատ այլ բնույթի հզոր բացասական ազդեցությունների, որոնք պահանջում են հատուկ միջոցներ

հոգեկան առողջության պահպանման և ամրապնդման համար: Սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցության ապահովման հայեցակարգը և մեթոդաբանությունը արտաքին միջավայրի սթրեսածին ազդեցությունների հաղթահարման համատեքստում, ընդգծելով սոցիալական կայունության և սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցության փոխհարաբերությունների խորքային առանձնահատկությունները, գործնական ուղիների որոնումն այսօր, առավել քան երբևէ, օրակարգային են՝ տեղին և հրատապ: Դրա ապացույցը ժամանակակից հասարակությունների տրանսֆորմացիոն գործընթացների մասին գիտական վկայություններն են, որտեղ անհատը, ինչպես սոցիալական խմբերը, պարբերաբար բախվում են բարդ և հակասական սոցիալ-հոգեբանական, տնտեսական, մշակութային և քաղաքակրթական գործընթացներին: Նման իրավիճակներում զարգանում և խորանում են անձի և սոցիալական խմբերի անոմիայի երևույթին բնորոշ դրսևորումները, բացակայում կամ թուլանում է վարքագծի կառավարման նորմատիվ համակարգը, խաթարվում են անձի ինքնաիրացման գործընթացները, անձնական ներուժի և իրականության նկատմամբ կառուցողական վերաբերմունքի ձևավորման փորձառությունը: Վերափոխման են ենթարկվում նաև հոգեբանական առանձնահատկությունները, հուզական-գնահատական բաղադրիչները, որոնք պայմանավորում են անձի ներքին հարմարվողականությունն ու հավասարակշռությունը, ինչը անխուսափելիորեն ազդում է անհատի բարեկեցության, վարքի և կյանքի սուբյեկտիվ զգացողության վրա: Ելնելով այն փաստից, որ ներկայումս ընդգծված է գիտական հանրության ուշադրությունը սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցության խնդիրների վրա, գնալով դժվարանում է դասակարգել ուսումնասիրվող երևույթին բնորոշ նշանները, ինչը, իր հերթին, հանգեցնում է սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցության ընդհանուր ընկալման աղավաղումների: Ուստի, այս ուսումնասիրության արդիականությունը պայմանավորված է սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցության գնահատման չափանիշների ձևավորման գիտական հայեցակարգի ներկայացման անհրաժեշտությամբ:

Բանալի բառեր՝ սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցություն, չափանիշներ, գնահատում, հոգեկան առողջություն, հասարակություն:

Introduction

Subjective well-being as a component of mental health is undoubtedly one of the main factors determining the quality of our lives. It is no secret that all aspects of a person's socialization, the formation of relationships with other people, socio-economic well-being, and physical components of health are largely related to the level of emotional well-being. As evidenced by many social and psychological studies, a person's mental abilities depend on the ability to manage one's emotional states and behavior. The ability to manage our psyche is one of the leading indicators of mental health. In many cases, we can talk about mental health and emotional well-being in an interconnected way. Based on this logic, various authors distinguish several signs of emotional well-being, of which we will list some:

- positive self-esteem and self-respect,
- correspondence of the level of psychosocial development to the age-

specific characteristics,

- adaptability,
- coping behavior,
- moral values

Emotionally healthy people, moving from one age group to another during their lives, successfully overcome the difficulties encountered at certain stages of their life path. Therefore, as some authors note, the ability to adapt is also a sign of emotional well-being. An emotionally healthy person has a reasonable degree of independence and can make independent decisions, plan his life, and follow his plans. A sign of emotional well-being is also the ability to care for other people, which is one of the main manifestations of moral values.

Theoretical and Methodological Bases

The category of subjective well-being of a person is closely related to the ideas of a harmonious and full existence of a person in various philosophical concepts, which, in turn, are associated with the psychodynamic approach to the main stages of self-knowledge and development of a person. The psychological problem of well-being, being subjective in itself as the main criterion for assessing a phenomenon, according to some authors, originates from the theories of existential-humanistic psychology and its modern branch, positive psychology.

The well-being and happiness of a person in various philosophical concepts are considered according to different principles that give meaning to human life.

Let us briefly dwell on some of them. As is known, according to the doctrine of hedonism, the main goal of human life and the criterion for assessing happiness are pleasure and constant joy. The Stoics consider the internal psychological state of a person as the main factor of happiness.

Eudaimonism connects happiness with the possession of virtue. Later, I. Kant (1922), based on the philosophical ideas of the ancient world, formulated an important idea, according to which the desire for well-being and happiness, originally given by nature, tends to be limited in the face of a rational principle, when a person, finding himself in conditions of observing social rules, is forced to adhere to these rules, thereby limiting the natural desire to receive pleasure. In the philosophy of A. Schopenhauer and F. Nietzsche, the emphasis on the assessment of well-being already carries the connotation of combining social and natural needs, and a person's happiness is assessed both as a social need for self-affirmation, self-development and as a natural desire to satisfy needs (Smith, 2014; Carus, 1907). Later, E. Fromm (Jean, 2016) and V. Frankl's (1992) ideas that a person's happiness is achieved by overcoming personal struggle and life difficulties, in realizing individuality, summarized many philosophical ideas about human well-being. For each direction or school, the methods and means of achieving psychological recovery and

well-being are formulated differently, depending on the conceptual structure of the theory and the corresponding criteria for evaluation. Thus, Z. Freud assumed that the main conditions for a well-being existence are meaningful work, love as an inner experience, and reason as the main criterion that gives meaning to a person's life (Sibi, 2020). A. Adler (Watts, 2015) changes the already entrenched perception of the criteria for assessing well-being and adds the criterion of friendship as the most important quality and skill of a person. K. Jung, in turn, introduces another feature of assessing well-being – harmony, which is capable of making a person's well-being even in the conditions of his uniqueness (O'Connor, 2024). This idea was developed by K. Horney (Sallehuddin, 2021) and E. Fromm (Jean, 2016), who formulated the ability to create meaningful relationships with other people as the most important criterion for assessing well-being, by which one can measure a person's completeness, responsibility and self-realization.

The processes of rapid development of modern societies are accompanied by socio-psychological changes in the perception of subjective well-being: subjective evaluations of human well-being, social roles, and goals change. In general, the scientific researches of recent years show that socio-psychological, economic, or political transformations of modern societies lead to the state of anomie in the social environment, where human social behavior is not guided by clear social norms. Similar observations were made by Keniston and Konty (Keniston, 1960; Konty, 2005). Kurtenbach's and Rettberg's theoretical developments point to the fact that anomic transformations lead to both the emergence of a sense of uncertainty and the disruption of the subjective perception of well-being. In anomic conditions of societal development, such as economic crises or socio-political, geopolitical transformations undermine the sense of social well-being and happiness (Kurtenbach & Rettberg, 2018). In the conditions of psychological anomie, the socio-psychological consequences of the crisis of social stability and negative changes in the perception of the level of well-being are increasingly expressed. Crises in society lead to aggressiveness, loneliness, and awareness of alienation. As a rule, an individual's behavior and priorities of psychological needs change significantly, often associated with emergencies or crises, changing the perception of happiness and subjective well-being (Hakobyan and Khachatryan, 2022a). In that context, the positive movement of social stability becomes more important, which allows to overcome previously existing anomic phenomena and to develop a concept that will have maximum applicability in new social conditions (Anheier, 2015; Walters, 2016).

There are many definitions of the well-being problem in the scientific literature. These definitions are formulated as an influence on various aspects of human life and are characterized according to society's social norms, philosophical views, and psychological needs of individuals and social groups. Therefore, ideas about well-being are expressed in the context of the level of happiness, health, and quality of life (APA Dictionary, 2023), inner harmony,

and peace (Alexandrova, 2017). According to A. Jarden and A. Roache's (2023) concept of well-being, different disciplines interpret this concept from the perspective of different scientific-theoretical approaches (Hakobyan et al., 2024; Anheier, 2015; Berk, 2006; Stone & Mackie, 2013; Zhou & Chen, 2019).

In the 21st century, when unprecedented social-political, economic, and cultural events and large-scale changes are taking place in the world, the concept of the subjective well-being of a person acquires a new aspect of manifestation.

The subjective well-being of a person and his attitude to various spheres of social life is an important indicator reflecting the level of development of society. According to Edward Diener's (1984) definition, subjective well-being mainly refers to the self-assessment of the quality of life. It includes both cognitive judgments and affective reactions through which people evaluate their lives in general and current social, socio-political, cultural, and other realities in particular. In the study of the problem of subjective well-being, two criteria levels are distinguished: internal, related to a person's self-awareness, and personal characteristics, and, secondly, external, those social conditions that are evaluated as opportunities to increase the level of well-being and lead to social stability (Hakobyan & Khachatryan, 2022b).

In the current period, well-being is explained not only by the problem of ensuring personal life conditions but also by the existence of all aspects of public life, in particular, the existence of social stability and the global problems of overcoming psychological anomie. It is in the light of these problems that certain socio-psychological processes take place, under the influence of which the perception of subjective well-being and social stability of a person is transformed, new economic, socio-psychological, and value system factors of the harmonious life of a person and social groups in society appear.

Social stability consists of three levels.

- internal stability of social systems (institutions, organizations, communities, etc.);
- stability of their relationships and interactions with each other;
- stability of the entire society, which can be called social stability.

Stability in society is achieved not by immutability or immobility, but by the principle of mature social development, during which socio-economic and other changes occur at the right time and in the right place. It can be said that social changes are a necessary condition and element of social stability. This is more relevant for the development of a conceptual model of criteria for assessing subjective well-being, especially in the context of anomic forms of social development, since in such conditions the outflow of the working population continues, social, economic, and, in general, civilizational processes proceed incomprehensibly or unpredictably for the country's population, there is no or weak trust in social institutions, which in turn undermines the basic human needs for security and life support.

Social stability is a stable state of the social system of society, allowing it to function and develop in the conditions of external and internal changes. In the long term, the main goal of developing a conceptual model of criteria for assessing subjective well-being and social stability is to coordinate the modern characteristics of subjective well-being and consider it in the context of the methodology for ensuring social stability and overcoming psychological anomie. In the future, it is planned to study the criteria for assessing subjective well-being through an empirical study, which will take into account the proposed assessment criteria, and the practical results can be aimed at ensuring sustainable growth in the standard and quality of life of the country's population and creating conditions for the development of human potential.

Methodology and Methods

Within the framework of this article, a comprehensive study of the criteria of subjective well-being was conducted, and internal, and personal characteristics of the manifestation of the phenomenon of well-being were compared with external, social conditions of stability. The methodological basis for the study of subjective well-being and social stability were the directions and methodological tools of various scientific disciplines: psychology, economics, statistics, cultural studies, and others. The purpose of the study is:

1. A comprehensive study of the criteria of subjective well-being and life prospects.
2. Studying the relationships between the criteria of subjective well-being and income.
3. The relationship between subjective well-being and adaptation to life events.

Results

Subjective well-being expresses the form of people's perception of health, life expectancy, and longevity, and is also expressed through subjective assessments. In psychology, the phenomenon of subjective well-being was studied mainly in the context of studying the relationship between subjective well-being and pain, which may indicate that positive emotions are associated with a decrease in pain sensitivity and an increase in the pain threshold. However, a comprehensive study of socio-psychological criteria for assessing subjective well-being and life prospects is still open.

Research in the field of social sciences examines certain criteria by which well-being is associated with a higher level of income. Among these criteria, the following can be noted:

- high income indicates the satisfaction of basic needs,
- high income indicates the achievement of goals, etc. According to the results of various studies, income is an important criterion for assessing life (as an indicator of subjective well-being), but is ambiguously assessed as a characteristic of positive and negative feelings. Therefore, to develop a conceptual model of criteria for assessing subjective well-being and social stability, it is necessary to

turn to different areas of human life, which will reveal various factors of subjective well-being.

The significance of life events is another important criterion in terms of adaptation to external, social conditions. Because the development orientation of modern societies as a whole acquires anomic forms, expressed through uncertainty, unpredictability, and social alienation of life prospects, it is necessary to deeply study not only the conditions and mechanisms of formation and deepening of psychological anomie but also the criteria and factors for assessing subjective well-being in the context of crisis, transforming societies.

Although the concept of “subjective well-being” has been studied by many authors, a universal, comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon does not exist today. It is necessary to coordinate the mass of accumulated data and develop a new conceptual model that combines the methodology and prospects of various theoretical approaches. Since the diversity of theoretical formulations also leads to certain problems in the diagnosis of subjective well-being, it is necessary to be extremely careful in choosing diagnostic tools and assessing the data obtained. Measuring subjective well-being and assessments of satisfaction with various spheres of social life will allow us to assess the degree of expression of public opinions and identify some problems of human adaptation to external conditions. The problem of social stability currently has not only scientific but also practical significance. The phenomenon of social stability is studied from the point of view of ensuring the socio-cultural and spiritual needs of people. Each person has different needs, but needs depend not only on personal qualities but also on the current state of development and activity of society. It can be said that social stability is one of the most important criteria for the development of society and the economy, since the goal of sustainable development is to make the environment, both social and natural, more favorable for life. Among the indicators of social stability are people’s stress resistance, job satisfaction, and attitude toward stability.

Conclusion

Summarizing the theoretical and practical results of social and psychological studies, we have come to the classification of the following two large groups of criteria for assessing subjective well-being:

- Psychological criteria for assessing subjective well-being,
- Socio-economic criteria for assessing subjective well-being.

The first group of criteria is represented by the psychological assessment system of a person’s mental health and is expressed in the levels of self-realization, and self-esteem, as well as the peculiarities of the manifestation of coping mechanisms and value systems, the opposite direction of the feeling of alienation from society and adaptability, and cognitive skills of self-management.

The second group of criteria is expressed in the social, and external components of well-being. In particular, the criteria of internal, interpersonal, and social stability of the social system, the correlation of high income with the level

of subjective well-being, as well as the nonlinear nature of this correlation are important. As a result of further studies, there will be a need to empirically study the above-mentioned criteria, their subclassifications, and their manifestations. characteristics in different gender, age, and social groups.

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