



A Research on the Subject Well-being of Regional College Students

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Abstract

In order to explore the subject well-being of regional college students, we have conducted a survey on college students from 5 regional colleges with Index of Subject Well-Being. It is shown that there are obvious differences lying in regional college students' subject well-being at the dimensions of source (urban or rural areas) and gender while there is no obvious difference in major (arts or science).

Keywords: Subject well-being, Life satisfaction, Index of Subject Well-Being, College students, Regional colleges

1. Introduction

In psychology, subject well-being (SWB) mainly refers to one's overall evaluation of his life quality based on his own standard, which serves as an important comprehensive psychological index to measure the basic life quality.

SWB has the following basic features: a. subjectivity--- based on the evaluator's internal standard instead of any standard set by others; b. stability--- mainly measuring long-term emotional reaction and life satisfaction; c. integrity--- a comprehensive evaluation including an evaluation as well as cognitive judgment on emotional reaction.

It is generally accepted that SWB is composed of three parts: life satisfaction, active emotions and passive emotions. Active and passive emotions are separate from each other and are influenced by different factors. That is to say, one's score in active emotions will not necessarily reveal that in passive emotions and vice versa. It is in 1950s that some national researches were conducted abroad about active emotions such as happiness and well-being. In the recent years, the researches on well-being in the west have reached an advanced level and achieved considerable goals. In China, however, it has not been attached importance to yet. Actually, this issue has been of increasing importance in the recent years with the improvement of Chinese people's living standards. Although more attention began to be paid to the researches on happiness and well-being in China in the middle 1980s, it mainly involves old people, leaving others untouched. As one dispensable part of active psychology, SWB deserves particular attention, especially for college students who are in an important period of their development. These young men are energetic, curious but have experienced insufficient hardships. Therefore, college students' psychological health and life quality are attracting more attention. It is of particular theoretical and practical significance to learn about their SWB, to analyze, predict, shape and correct their cognition and behavior as well as to coordinate their psychological problems.

Many factors influence SWB, some of which have mutual influences with SWB. There is no definite conclusion what is the cause or the effect. In spite of the great number of researches in China, most of them are theoretical ones instead of empirical ones, leaving regional college students' subject well-being as a blank field. We conducted such a relevant research in order to reveal SWB of Shandong college students and further analyze the factors influencing their SWB.

2. Object of Study

We randomly chose 1200 college students from 5 regional colleges of Shandong Province and received 926 valid questionnaires. Among those, 497 ones are from male students while 429 are from female ones; 486 are from arts students and 440 are from science students. 517 are from the countryside while 409 from urban areas.

3. Instrument

In my research, Index of Well-Being is employed to measure the degree of the examinees' happiness. This index scale is composed of two parts: an overall emotional index, including 8 items describing the connotation of emotions from different aspects, and a questionnaire of life satisfaction, which includes only one item. Every item is scored with 7 grades. The total score is gained by adding the average of the overall emotional index and that of the life satisfaction questionnaire (weight 1.1).

It turned out that the total ranged from 2.1 (least happy) to 14.7 (most happy) and had favorable validity with its retest reliability of 0.56 (Wang, 1993).

4. Manipulation and Data Processing

The examiner, some teachers majoring in psychology and I, conducted a collective examination in classroom. After some necessary explanations, we distributed and withdrew questionnaires on the spot. All the data was processed with SPSS 11.0.

5. Results

Insert Table 1 here

It is shown in Table 1 that regional college students from different sources display obvious differences in their subject well-being. To be more specific, urban students have slightly higher well-being than rural ones. In addition, obvious differences are also revealed in Item 2 and Item 4. However, both get relatively low scores in Item 5 and 7.

Insert Table 2 here

It is shown that regional college students display obvious differences in their subject well-being at the dimension of gender, with that of female students higher than that of male. In addition, differences also exist in Item 1 and 3. It calls for our attention that both get relatively low scores in Item 5 and 8.

Insert Table 3 here

It is shown in Table 3 that no obvious difference can be found at the dimension of major but in Item 4 and 5 there are still obvious differences. Both get relatively low scores in Item 7 and 8.

5. Discussion

5.1 SWB Differences between Urban and Rural Areas

It can be revealed in our survey that the well-being index of urban college students is obviously higher than that of rural students. Urban students have stronger abilities than rural students in social communication as well as adaptive capability to environment because of, in our opinion, the differences in politics, economy and culture between urban and rural areas. In spite of the rapid development in its economy and culture in the recent years, China's rural areas still lag behind urban areas. Therefore, compared with urban students, who have stayed in a cultural environment quite similar to that of universities, rural students are faced with a totally contrastive environment when they come to university, hence suffering from greater pressure in self-coordination and adaptation.

5.2 SWB Differences in Gender

There are differences in SWB caused by different genders, with that of female students higher than that of male ones. This finding is in conflict with that of Biaobin Yan and Xuezheng Zheng in students from key universities, according to which the gender factor doesn't exert any obvious influence on college students' well-being (Yan, 2003). This may be attributed to higher expectations of the society for male students, which results in a wide gap between their ideal and the reality and, therefore, lower life satisfaction. In Item 1 and 3, female students' scores are obviously greater than that of male students perhaps because of its prematurity. Treating study as their first priority, they will effectively remind themselves of the importance of learning and benefit from it accordingly, including being in the lead, cultivating efficacy and stimulating achievement motivation (Xiao, 2003). A lot of evidences show that a majority of female students concentrate on their study with great enthusiasm, strong life consciousness and solid basic knowledge, hence enjoying greater life satisfaction.

5.3 SWB Differences in Major

There is no obvious difference in college students' SWB caused by different majors. The low scores in Item 7 reveal that some students from all majors have to be buried in their study although they are reluctant to do so. Arts students' lower scores in Item 5 are partly due to a traditional idea that science majors are more practical than arts ones and they require stronger ability of logic, stronger creativity in solving problems and stronger achievement motivation (Zhang, 2002), as well as unscientific teaching and management in which a lot of defects exist in the current examination system. However, in Item 4, arts students are far better than science students perhaps because of more social activities (drama clubs, poem clubs) held in them.

According to this research, regional college students are basically satisfied with their life quality and condition. Some low scores in some individual items, such as in Item 5, reveal their greater attention to the internal value of their life, including accomplishing their goals, improving their learning abilities and improving their morality. Teachers are expected to give students access to the characteristics of their major, their prospect, and their future social value as well as to conduct research teaching. In addition, universities should also create conditions for students' practice relevant to their major in order to help students to combine their value of life with their major learning, hence improving their life quality in university.

6. Conclusion

- (1) Obvious differences are found in regional college students' SWB caused by their different sources, with that of urban college students obviously higher than that of rural students.
- (2) There are obvious differences in SWB caused by different genders, with that of female students higher than that of male ones.
- (3) There is no obvious difference in college students' SWB caused by different majors.
- (4) Regional college students are basically satisfied with their life quality and condition, with low scores in some individual items, such as in the item of "empty-full".

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Table 1. Differences in college students' well-being from different sources (x±s)

Item	Urban areas(n=409)	Rural areas (n=517)	t
1 bored-interested	5.02±1.46	5.38±1.21	1.445
2 painful-happy	4.97±1.16	5.64±1.39	1.973*
3 useless-useful	5.96±0.91	5.49±1.25	0.894
4 lonely -enjoying friendship	5.55±1.57	4.62±1.44	2.425*
5 empty-full	4.83±1.36	4.81±1.38	0.836
6 hopeless-hopeful	5.65±1.07	5.53±1.73	0.797
7 depressed-rewarding	4.98±1.19	4.89±1.15	0.798
8 pessimistic-optimistic	5.18±1.17	5.45±1.17	1.19
Overall emotional index(weight 1)	5.27±1.31	5.21±1.15	1.73
Overall satisfaction(weight 1.1)	5.66±1.20	5.21±1.25	1.88
Well-being index	10.93±1.25	10.42±1.78	2.55**

*P<0 05, **P<0 01, (similarly hereinafter)

Table 2. Gender differences in college students' well-being (x±s)

Item	Male(n=497)	Female (n=429)	t
1 bored-interested	5.02±1.17	5.79±1.61	2.033*
2 painful-happy	5.17±1.25	4.98±1.36	0.896
3 useless-useful	4.96±0.95	5.47±1.05	2.279*
4 lonely -enjoying friendship	5.15±1.55	4.99±1.44	1.255
5 empty-full	4.69±1.69	4.81±1.38	0.837
6 hopeless-hopeful	5.65±1.02	5.59±1.13	0.698
7 depressed-rewarding	5.63±1.18	5.72±1.14	0.748
8 pessimistic-optimistic	4.78±1.14	4.65±1.17	1.49
Overall emotional index(weight 1)	5.13±1.31	5.25±1.55	1.73
Overall satisfaction(weight 1.1)	5.36±1.20	5.66±1.25	1.88
Well-being index	10.49±1.72	10.91±1.38	2.026*

Table 3. Major differences in college students' well-being (x±s)

Item	Arts(n=486)	Science (n=440)	t
1 bored-interested	5.25±1.56	5.19±1.41	0.832
2 painful-happy	5.47±1.26	5.24±1.35	1.377
3 useless-useful	5.76±0.95	5.65±1.05	0.844
4 lonely -enjoying friendship	4.57±1.51	5.82±1.41	2.225*
5 empty-full	5.33±1.39	4.61±1.38	2.496 *
6 hopeless-hopeful	5.33±1.02	5.23±1.13	0.797
7 depressed-rewarding	4.88±1.13	4.96±1.15	0.948
8 pessimistic-optimistic	4.98±1.17	4.85±1.17	1.67
Overall emotional index(weight 1)	5.22±1.44	5.19±0.97	1.73
Overall satisfaction(weight 1.1)	5.66±1.21	5.46±1.25	1.88
Well-being index	10.88±1.76	10.65±1.28	1.45