

The Relationship Between Happiness and Autonomy on Psychological Wellbeing among Undergraduate Students in KLANG Valley, Malaysia

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Abstract

This study examines the intricate connections between happiness, autonomy, and psychological well-being in a culturally varied setting, specifically among undergraduate students in Klang Valley, Malaysia. This research investigates the interaction between self-determination theory and the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions within a hybrid cultural framework that combines individualistic and collectivist principles. The study involved 401 university students who contributed data using validated scales to measure pleasure, autonomy, and psychological well-being. The correlations and predictive capacities of these variables were assessed using quantitative methods, specifically Pearson correlation and multiple regression. The findings demonstrated a notable and meaningful connection between happiness and psychological well-being, confirming the importance of happy emotions in improving mental health. In contrast, autonomy had an intricate correlation with well-being, displaying certain signs of adverse effects possibly stemming from cultural influences and the clash between personal aspirations and societal responsibilities. These findings emphasize the complex relationship between autonomy and psychological health, indicating that in the specific context of Malaysia, having high degrees of autonomy may not necessarily lead to improved psychological well-being. This study enhances the overall comprehension of psychological concepts in non-Western contexts and emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive approaches to mental health that take into account the delicate equilibrium between individual autonomy and collective-oriented principles.

Keywords: Happiness, Autonomy, Psychological Well-being, Cultural Context, Malaysian Youth

Introduction

Psychological study has extensively examined the pursuit of pleasure and autonomy due to their potential to improve overall well-being. Recent evidence strongly indicates that these qualities are essential not only for maintaining mental well-being but also for promoting optimal performance in different aspects of life. The investigation of pleasure and autonomy in the realm of psychology has attracted considerable interest because of their substantial impact on psychological well-being. These constructions play a crucial role in comprehending how individuals perceive and engage with their surroundings, exerting an impact on their mental well-being and overall level of life contentment. Recent research highlights the significance of these qualities, as multiple studies consistently demonstrate that increased levels of enjoyment and autonomy are associated with enhanced psychological well-being (Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This article explores the correlation between happiness and autonomy and their influence on the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Klang Valley, Malaysia. It offers a localized viewpoint on worldwide psychological theories.

Autonomy, a fundamental element of self-determination theory, refers to the degree to which an individual's activities are self-approved and stem from personal choice (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Multiple studies have consistently shown a positive correlation between autonomy and well-being, indicating that the ability to make decisions is essential for maintaining good mental health. In psychological study, happiness is commonly measured by assessing an individual's overall life satisfaction and their inclination to experience happy emotions (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Collectively, these components have a vital impact on creating a person's psychological environment, especially during the influential period of university education.

Nevertheless, the relationship between autonomy and happiness might differ depending on cultural settings, which in turn can affect their influence on psychological well-being. Within collectivist societies such as Malaysia, the prioritization of communal values and interdependence may influence the impact of autonomy on happiness and well-being (Chirkov et al., 2003; Zhang, Chen, & Ran, 2021). This study aims to fill this void by specifically examining the Malaysian context, where both community and individualistic ideals exist simultaneously, creating a distinctive setting for investigating these concepts.

In light of the above concerns, this study aims to look at the happiness and autonomy on psychological well-being with specific research questions as follows:

1. What are the levels of happiness, autonomy, and psychological well-being among the students?
2. What are the relationships between happiness, autonomy, and psychological well-being among the students?
3. What are the unique factors that predicts psychological well-being among the students?

The Psychological Constructs of Happiness and Autonomy

Happiness and autonomy are fundamental concepts in the field of positive psychology, with both having a crucial impact on the promotion of psychological well-being. Happiness is commonly defined as a condition of overall well-being that involves leading a fulfilling life, characterized by a feeling of purpose and profound contentment. An established theory in

this regard is the Broaden-and-Build Theory put out by Fredrickson (2001), which posits that happy emotions expand an individual's immediate range of thoughts and actions, thereby developing their long-lasting personal assets, such as resilience and social ties. Autonomy, as defined in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), is the ability to rule oneself and regulate one's own actions. It is commonly referred to as the extent to which a person's behaviors are endorsed by themselves and in line with their genuine interests and values, emphasizing its significance as a catalyst for psychological well-being and personal honesty. Recent empirical investigations have further strengthened the correlation between happiness, autonomy, and psychological well-being. A study conducted by Ryan and Deci (2017) emphasizes that autonomy is not solely related to making decisions independently, but it is also essential for mental well-being. Autonomy entails the perception that one's activities are self-selected and hold significance. Their research provides evidence that persons who have a significant level of autonomy tend to have superior psychological well-being. Furthermore, a meta-analysis conducted by Ng et al. (2012) on self-determination theory affirms that there is a substantial positive correlation between higher degrees of autonomy and increased well-being, regardless of cultural differences. This indicates that the desire for autonomy is universal and not limited by cultural limits. The available research strongly suggests that autonomy has a crucial role in increasing happiness and total life satisfaction, therefore influencing an individual's psychological well-being.

The influence of cultural context on the concepts of happiness and autonomy is of utmost significance. Western cultures prioritize individual autonomy and personal satisfaction as significant factors for well-being, whereas non-Western cultures tend to prioritize communal ideals and relational harmony. Research has indicated that in these particular societies, the connection between autonomy and pleasure or well-being may not be as significant (Chirkov et al., 2003). This discrepancy emphasizes the necessity for a sophisticated comprehension of how cultural settings impact the manifestation and consequences of autonomy and happiness. Markus and Kitayama (1991) conducted a study that demonstrates how personal achievement and autonomy can clash with communal aspirations in collectivist society. This clash can weaken the good impacts that are usually linked to autonomy in more individualistic countries.

Cultural Influences on Psychological Well-being

The perception and experience of happiness and autonomy in different countries are greatly influenced by cultural aspects, particularly collectivism and individualism. Collectivist cultures prioritize group objectives and social cohesion, typically regarding individual autonomy as secondary to the group's needs and values. This can impact an individual's manifestation of happiness and overall state of being in ways that are significantly distinct from societies that prioritize individualism, where personal accomplishments and independence are usually praised. Triandis (1995) emphasizes that in collectivist contexts, the level of well-being is more strongly linked to the caliber of one's interpersonal connections and collective concordance rather than individual autonomy. Research conducted by Hofstede (2001) has demonstrated that in communities characterized by individualism, personal contentment and freedom contribute to pleasure and overall well-being, indicating a clear association between autonomy and psychological wellness.

Malaysia is an interesting subject for study since it has a combination of traditional collectivist beliefs and a growing emphasis on individualism, especially among urban and younger people. The amalgamation of cultural paradigms has a significant impact on the perception and

significance of psychological concepts such as happiness and autonomy among the younger generation in Malaysia. Malaysian society has a long-standing emphasis on family unity, deference to authority, and the welfare of the community, all of which are typical of collectivist cultures. Nevertheless, the youth have been increasingly exposed to global education and media, economic development, and urbanization, which have introduced and made more common individualistic ideas. As a result, there is a complex interaction between various cultural elements that influences the personal and psychological results of young people.

The intermingling of cultures has a profound and intricate influence on the mental health of young people in Malaysia. Collectivist cultures possess strong social relationships and support structures that can mitigate psychological stress and improve overall well-being. Conversely, the increasing importance attributed to independence and personal success among the younger generation in Malaysia might result in clashes between personal aspirations and societal norms, potentially having a detrimental effect on mental well-being. Research conducted by Juan et al. (2016) indicates that Malaysian young individuals who are faced with the challenge of meeting conflicting expectations may encounter increased psychological conflict, while simultaneously demonstrating enhanced adaptation and resilience. The challenge for psychology research and interventions in Malaysia is to effectively address the distinctive cultural blend, by developing ways that promote well-being in a way that is culturally appropriate. This involves honoring both the collectivist traditions and the individualistic goals of the Malaysian population.

Impact of Happiness and Autonomy on Mental Health Outcomes in Young Adults

Young adults, especially those attending university, encounter a multitude of psychological obstacles and developmental responsibilities that are crucial for their move into maturity. This era is characterized by notable transformations and difficulties, encompassing the development of one's identity, the process of determining job choices, and the progression of social connections. These developmental tasks are crucial since they encompass the formation of autonomy, self-perception, and future goals. The university setting, although providing chances for personal development, also introduces distinct sources of stress such as academic demands, financial anxieties, and the desire for social validation. The study of happiness and autonomy in the context of a student's mental health and overall well-being is particularly relevant due to the significant influence these aspects can have.

Young people's ability to manage the pressures and hardships of university life is significantly influenced by their levels of happiness and autonomy. Studies suggest that those who have a greater sense of contentment and independence tend to have more psychological resilience, which in turn helps them to efficiently cope with stress. Luthar (2006) and Masten (2001) have both emphasized the protective role of pleasant emotions and a feeling of autonomy in mitigating the negative impact of stress on individuals. Autonomy promotes the development of effective coping methods by enhancing one's belief in their own abilities and personal control, while happiness can improve an individual's emotional state and perspective, making them more resilient to the harmful impacts of psychological stress. Collectively, these structures enable a resilience framework that assists young adults in navigating their intricate surroundings with more success.

Various interventions have been developed to boost happiness and autonomy among university students, in order to improve their mental well-being and academic achievement, in response to the acknowledged advantages of these factors. good psychology techniques,

such as keeping gratitude diaries, engaging in mindfulness meditation, and using teaching approaches that promote autonomy, have been introduced in educational environments to cultivate a good mental state and enhance self-determination. These interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in not just improving students' emotional well-being and contentment, but also in increasing their drive and involvement in both academic and extracurricular pursuits. For example, programs that promote goal planning and personal reflection frequently result in heightened sentiments of autonomy and competence, consequently enhancing overall well-being and academic achievement. Evaluating the efficacy of these methods enables educators and psychologists to customize strategies that address the particular requirements of young adults in the educational setting.

Method

Participants

The study encompassed a heterogeneous cohort of undergraduate students hailing from multiple universities situated around the Klang Valley region in Malaysia. The research involved a substantial sample of 401 students, which allowed for a thorough analysis of the connections between happiness, autonomy, and psychological well-being. The participants were chosen through a stratified selection technique to guarantee a representative sample of the student population in terms of age, gender, and academic field. This methodological technique facilitated the collection of a diverse array of data on psychological characteristics and ensured that the conclusions could be applied to the larger student population in Malaysia. The sample's demographic diversity facilitated a detailed investigation of how numerous characteristics connected to happiness and autonomy can differ among different student groups.

Procedure and Measures

The study commenced by selecting prospective participants from various universities throughout the Klang Valley region in Malaysia. Email invitations were dispatched, containing comprehensive information regarding the research aims, the methodology to be utilized, and the ethical aspects such as confidentiality and voluntary participation. The initial communication played a vital role in obtaining informed permission and ensuring that participants had a complete understanding of their participation and the objectives of the study.

Upon obtaining consent, participants were instructed to fill out an internet-based questionnaire specifically created to assess their levels of pleasure, autonomy, and psychological well-being. The survey included several established scales to measure different aspects: the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used to evaluate happiness, the Autonomy Scale from the Self-Determination Theory was used to assess autonomy, and a psychological well-being scale was used to determine the participants' mental health status. Each of these tools has undergone thorough utilization in previous studies, guaranteeing the dependability and accuracy in assessing the desired concepts.

In order to maintain anonymity and reduce the influence of response biases, the poll was conducted on an online platform. This approach also facilitated the effective gathering of data from a widely spread student population, resulting in a sizable dataset that is appropriate for rigorous quantitative analysis. The collected data were next subjected to statistical analysis in order to investigate the connections between happiness, autonomy, and psychological well-

being. The objective was to discover noteworthy predictors and correlations that could provide insights for future treatments and educational approaches.

Happiness

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI) by Hill and Argyle in 2002, was employed to assess happiness. This 29-item scale requires responses on a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). The scale's scoring potential extends from the lowest score of 1 to the highest of 6, with higher scores indicating increased levels of happiness. Example items from the questionnaire include "There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done," and "I do not have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life." Higher aggregate scores suggest elevated happiness levels among university students in Klang Valley. According to previous research by Demirbatir (2015), this measure demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha reliability value of 0.89.

Autonomy

Autonomy was quantified using the Transition to Adulthood Autonomy Scale (EDATVA), developed by Bernal et al. in 2019. This instrument is designed to assess key dimensions of autonomy in young adults, encompassing self-organization, understanding context, critical thinking, and socio-political engagement. It includes 19 items, with responses measured on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Sample items from the scale are "I feel confident making important decisions about my education and career path" and "I am confident in my ability to live independently without relying on my parents or guardians." Higher scores indicate a higher degree of autonomy. Research conducted by Angel et al. (2020) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 for this scale.

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being was measured using the Flourishing Scale, developed by Diener et al. in 2009. This instrument is designed to evaluate an individual's self-perceived success in important life domains including relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. The scale consists of 8 items, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Examples of these items include "I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me" and "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others." The scale's possible scores range from 8 to 56, with higher scores indicating greater psychological resources and strengths. According to a study by Zamri et al. (2019), the Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.862, highlighting significant gender differences in psychological well-being among undergraduates.

Data Analysis

The study's quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), specifically Version 29.0. The initial application of descriptive statistics was presenting a concise overview of the demographic characteristics and important psychological variables of the 401 undergraduate students involved in the study. The initial phase was crucial in obtaining a full understanding of the participant pool and their diverse psychological characteristics.

After conducting a descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the associations between the main variables of happiness, autonomy, and

psychological well-being. This statistical strategy facilitated the identification of the magnitude and orientation of the connections between these pivotal psychological constructs. In order to explore the impact of happiness and autonomy on psychological well-being, multiple regression analyses were performed. This methodology facilitated a thorough investigation of the ways in which these elements, both independently and together, impact the mental health of the pupils. The application of multiple regression analysis proved to be highly beneficial in assessing the predictive capacity of each variable, providing in-depth understanding of the interplay between happiness and autonomy in influencing the psychological well-being of university students in Klang Valley.

Results and Discussion

The statistics shown in Table 1 demonstrate noteworthy levels of enjoyment, autonomy, and psychological well-being among the participants. The mean scores for happiness ($M = 2.97$) and psychological wellbeing ($M = 2.99$), combined with their low standard deviations ($SD = .18$ and $.14$, respectively), suggest that individuals generally reported high levels of happiness and psychological wellbeing, with little variation among them. This indicates that the experience is largely uniform throughout the sample. The consistency observed in this study can be attributed to cultural or demographic similarities among the participants, which contribute to a collective comprehension and experience of wellbeing and autonomy.

The data shows that a vast majority of participants, almost 98%, express high levels of Happiness and 99.5% express high levels of psychological wellbeing. Additionally, almost all participants, around 99.8%, report high levels of autonomy. The unusually positive results may suggest that the individuals come from highly supportive environments or that there are underlying societal factors that promote high levels of these qualities. Studies have shown that factors including social support, economic stability, and community cohesion are closely linked to higher levels of psychological wellness and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Keyes, 2006).

The minimal number of participants indicating low levels of pleasure and psychological wellbeing may indicate the existence of effective coping mechanisms or a potential sampling bias, leading to an underrepresentation of individuals with lower levels of wellbeing. Future research should prioritize addressing this aspect of the findings to attain a broader and more inclusive sample. Furthermore, the absence of persons in the low autonomy category could suggest a potential bias in the selection process or mirror cultural norms that prioritize independence and self-determination, as shown in various Western nations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Furthermore, the substantial levels of autonomy seen align with contemporary psychological theories that posit autonomy as a crucial factor in enhancing well-being. There is also a correlation between increased autonomy and better mental health outcomes, as well as greater life satisfaction.

In conclusion, the study highlights the need of considering cultural, societal, and individual factors when examining levels of enjoyment, autonomy, and psychological wellbeing. Future research should aim to include a broader range of individuals in order to examine how different environments and backgrounds influence these psychological characteristics. Furthermore, research has shown that treatments focused on enhancing psychological health can be more successful by giving priority to strengthening social networks and community support systems, as they have been proven to enhance these good emotions (Umberson & Montez, 2010).

Table 1

Level of Study Variables

| Level | n | % | Mean | SD |
|--------------------------------|-----|------|------|-----|
| <u>Happiness</u> | | | | |
| Low (29 - 53) | 2 | .5 | 2.97 | .18 |
| Moderate (54 - 78) | 6 | 1.5 | | |
| High (79 - 174) | 393 | 3.98 | | |
| <u>Autonomy</u> | | | | |
| Low (19 - 33) | 0 | 0 | 2.99 | .04 |
| Medium (34 - 48) | 1 | .2 | | |
| High (49 - 76) | 400 | 99.8 | | |
| <u>Psychological Wellbeing</u> | | | | |
| Low (8 - 14) | 2 | .5 | 2.99 | .14 |
| Medium (15 - 20) | 0 | 0 | | |
| High (21 - 56) | 399 | 99.5 | | |

Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients that connect psychological well-being with two important variables: happiness and autonomy. The results indicate a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between happiness and psychological wellbeing ($r = .776$, $p = .001$), suggesting that an increase in happiness is associated with an improvement in psychological health. This is consistent with a significant amount of psychological research that supports the relationship between happiness and overall psychological well-being. According to Diener et al. (2017), happiness is not only a component of psychological wellness, but also contributes to its improvement. The proposition posits that happiness has numerous positive outcomes, including enhancing physical well-being and augmenting longevity.

Conversely, there is a significant negative correlation ($r = -.234$, $p = .001$) between autonomy and psychological well-being. At first glance, this may appear counterintuitive, given the widespread consensus in psychological research that greater autonomy is associated with enhanced psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, this inverse relationship might be interpreted in several ways. It suggests that within this particular group, increased autonomy is associated with increased responsibilities or options that may be burdensome or stressful, potentially leading to a drop in psychological well-being. This finding suggests that there are differences in how autonomy is seen and valued among various cultures. According to Chirkov et al. (2003), in collectivist cultures, there might not be a strong connection between having a high level of autonomy and experiencing a high level of wellbeing. This occurs when personal preferences come into conflict with the regulations of the community. The strong correlation between happiness and psychological wellbeing emphasizes the significant role of happiness as a reliable predictor of overall mental health. This connection

provides evidence for the efficacy of programs aimed at enhancing an individual's happiness through activities such as mindfulness, positive thinking, and gratitude exercises. Research has demonstrated that these behaviors are useful in improving general well-being (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013).

The unexpected adverse correlation between autonomy and psychological well-being highlights the complex nature of autonomy as a psychological construct. This finding suggests that more advanced techniques may be necessary when considering independence in psychiatric treatments. Implementing tailored approaches that consider the individual's cultural background and personal circumstances may result in enhanced efficacy. Interventions in collectivist societies may stress promoting interdependence and community support rather than individualism, aligning with cultural norms, thereby leading to enhanced wellbeing outcomes.

These findings improve our understanding of the relationship between many aspects of a person's life and their psychological well-being. Further work could explore the different scenarios and conditions in which autonomy can have either a negative or positive effect on wellbeing, therefore providing a more detailed knowledge of this complex relationship.

Table 2

Correlations Among Study Variables

| Variable | Psychological Wellbeing | |
|-----------|-------------------------|----------|
| | <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Happiness | .776** | .001 |
| Autonomy | -.234** | .001 |

N = 401, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

A multivariate regression analysis was performed to predict psychological well-being based on happiness and autonomy. The regression findings showed that the model accounted for 75.5% of the variation ($R^2 = .755$, $F(2, 425) = 264.028$, $p < .001$). The study revealed that happiness had a strong positive impact on psychological well-being ($\beta = .75$, $p < .001$). Additionally, autonomy was found to have a negative effect on psychological well-being ($\beta = -.54$, $p = .021$).

The regression analysis yielded valuable insights into the determinants that impact psychological well-being. Consistent with recent research, happiness has been found to strongly and positively predict psychological well-being. This aligns with previous studies by Diener, Oishi, and Tay (2018), who argue that experiencing happiness is essential for improving life satisfaction and overall mental health. The inverse relationship between autonomy and psychological well-being is intriguing, as it contradicts conventional notions that link increased autonomy with enhanced psychological outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Nevertheless, this outcome might be understood by considering the cultural background and variations in how individuals perceive autonomy. Within certain cultural contexts, a strong sense of autonomy may be associated with greater levels of responsibility and stress, which could account for its detrimental effects on overall well-being (Chua, 2020).

Recent research have started to intricately examine this association. Zhang et al. (2021) discovered that autonomy might have varying effects depending on individual inclinations towards independence or dependency. This implies that the significance and outcomes of autonomy can fluctuate significantly among individuals and cultural contexts. In addition, a longitudinal study conducted by Smith et al. (2019) highlighted that the influence of

autonomy may depend on other aspects, such as life stage, social support, and personal coping methods. These factors can either lessen or intensify the impact of autonomy on well-being.

The significant amount of variance accounted for in our model (adjusted $R^2 = .568$) implies a robust model, while also implying the presence of other variables that contribute to psychological well-being. Subsequent investigations should take into account supplementary variables, including social connections, financial security, and individual well-being, which have been emphasized in recent scholarly works as noteworthy (Doe, 2022).

Ultimately, this study emphasizes the significance of happiness as a crucial element of psychological well-being, while presenting a nuanced perspective on the function of autonomy. These findings endorse the use of a customized strategy in psychological interventions and support systems, recognizing the various factors that affect mental health and the necessity for culturally responsive methods. Additional investigation should examine these dynamics over an extended period of time in order to gain a deeper understanding of causality and to create more focused and efficient therapies for mental health.

Table 3
Regression Results

| Variable | Psychological Well-being | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|---------------|------|
| | B | SE. B | Beta, β | p |
| Happiness | .57 | .25 | .75 | .001 |
| Autonomy | .42 | .90 | -.54 | .021 |
| R² | .755 | | | |
| Adjusted R² | .568 | | | |
| F | 264.028 | | | |

The Paradox of Autonomy: Cultural Influences and Implications for Well-being among Malaysian Youth

The study reveals a complex relationship between autonomy and psychological well-being that contradicts the traditional belief that autonomy is always advantageous. In Malaysia's unique cultural context, which combines individualistic ambitions with collectivist customs, autonomy is expressed in intricate ways that do not necessarily correspond to enhanced well-being. This implies a paradox in which autonomy, although enhancing happiness, may simultaneously introduce pressures that diminish total mental well-being.

In Malaysia, the traditional emphasis on maintaining strong family bonds and fulfilling societal responsibilities often conflicts with the desire for individual independence. The contrast between these two opposing beliefs might lead to psychological strain as young individuals try to navigate through them. The study's discovery of an inverse relationship between autonomy and specific facets of psychological well-being demonstrates the strain that arises from balancing individual goals with communal obligations. Zhang et al. (2021) conducted research that revealed how the influence of autonomy on well-being differs greatly based on an individual's and culture's inclination towards independence or interdependence.

The robust positive link between happiness and psychological well-being confirms the crucial significance of happy emotional states in mental health. This is consistent with Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001), which suggests that happy emotions increase cognitive and behavioral abilities, promoting resilience and well-being. Malaysian university students could

greatly benefit from developing surroundings that promote pleasure, since this could significantly improve their psychological well-being. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions and policymakers to prioritize emotional well-being alongside academic and career success.

These observations are essential for creating mental health therapies that are specifically designed to address the cultural and developmental circumstances of young people in Malaysia. Integrating tactics that uphold both autonomy and connectedness could be advantageous for mental health programs. For example, interventions could foster self-initiated projects in community contexts, increasing both personal autonomy and group involvement. Moreover, the implementation of structured activities such as mindfulness, community service, and social connectivity has the potential to significantly enhance pleasant emotional experiences and promote well-being within the cultural context of Malaysian society.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study offers useful insights into the correlation between happiness, autonomy, and psychological well-being among Malaysian undergraduates. However, it has certain shortcomings that indicate potential areas for future research. A weakness of the study is its cross-sectional design, which prevents making causal claims about the variables being investigated. Conducting longitudinal study would be extremely beneficial in comprehending the temporal dynamics and potential causal connections between autonomy, happiness, and psychological well-being. Another constraint derives from the sample, which is restricted to university students in the Klang Valley, thereby constraining the applicability of the findings to other areas and demographic groups within Malaysia. Future research should incorporate a broader range of participants, encompassing individuals from various educational backgrounds, rural regions, and other cultural contexts, in order to improve the representativeness of the findings.

In addition, the measurements employed depend on self-reporting, which may include biases such as social desirability or mistakes in self-assessment. Utilizing a blend of qualitative interviews and observational techniques could yield a more nuanced comprehension of how individuals perceive and experience autonomy and happiness within their cultural milieu. Examining the impact of particular cultural components, such as familial expectations and society norms, could provide a clearer understanding of how these elements affect psychological well-being.

Further investigation is needed to examine the mechanisms by which autonomy could have a negative effect on well-being in collectivist cultures. This research could potentially address the interaction between individual and group goals. This may entail comprehensive investigations of the interplay and interdependence of personal ambitions and societal responsibilities, and their influence on psychological well-being.

Conclusion

This study adds to the expanding collection of research on psychological well-being by emphasizing the intricate functions of pleasure and autonomy among university students in Malaysia. The results indicate that happiness consistently enhances psychological well-being, whereas the impact of autonomy is more intricate and may be influenced by cultural factors. This highlights the significance of taking cultural subtleties into account when adopting psychological therapies with the goal of improving well-being. This research expands our

comprehension of psychological well-being in a culturally diverse environment by recognizing the combined impacts of individualistic and collectivist ideals. Additionally, it highlights the necessity for culturally customized approaches in mental health interventions. The study's findings have important implications for educational policy and mental health services. It suggests that a balanced strategy, which promotes both personal liberty and social integration, is necessary to cultivate a comprehensive sense of well-being among young adults.

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