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## The Holistic Well-being Concepts in Relation to Quality of Life

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### Abstract

These days more people search for better physical and mental health conditions. Everyone strives for the well-being, especially during this uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, well-being has become an interesting topic nowadays. This study presents the critical review of holistic well-being concepts and how the concepts related to the quality of life. The study explores the definition of well-being in terms of Western, Eastern, and Buddhism concepts. To illustrate, the Western concept presents two aspects: subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Meanwhile, the Eastern concept explains the definition of well-being from the perspectives of quality of life and Gross National Happiness. The Buddhist principle concept presents well-being regarding four dimensions: physical, moral, emotional, and intellectual. The study then has introduced the concept of holistic well-being which is classified into four perspectives: physical, psychological, behavioral, and intellectual well-being. Apart from this, reviewing of literatures also represent that holistic well-being is associated with quality of life. The person with holistic well-being would gain the individual benefit of physical and mental health. Holistic well-being is also associated with a good social life. The study also presents several organizations that are applied well-being to improve quality of life. The implication of organizations shows that if employees with good well-being are usually more effective, productive and motivated and this will promote sustainable growth for the organization.

Keywords: concepts, health, quality of life, physical, psychological, and well-being

### Introduction

It is undeniable that life is uncertain. It is human nature to feel worried or anxious about a change, uncertainty, or any uncontrollable situation. Furthermore, these days the workplace is a fast-paced and stressful environment and this puts even more pressure on everyone in the organization. Worry is defined as an attempt to engage in mental problem-solving to solve an issue whose result is uncertain but likely negative (Borkovec & Costello, 1993) or can be perceived as an apprehensive expectation about real-life concerns such as health, relations, finances, work, and school (Barlow, 2002). The body and mind are interconnected, and emotions play a big part in determining health status. Its close associations with psychology,

neurology, endocrinology, nutrition, and the environment significantly affect the immune system with its peaceful nature.

When feeling depressed or worried, some distract their mind by eating the food they like, going shopping, or going to a party, but the thought or worry comes back when they are alone. They cannot stop a negative thinking loop. Therefore, people have searched for a long-term solution to promote their well-being. Besides, many organizations start introducing well-being programs to promote a happier healthier environment since well-being is important for organizational success (Dewe & Cooper, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to study the holistic concepts of well-being to improve human health and quality of life based on the well-being concepts from Western, Eastern, and Buddhism. Furthermore, this literature review includes the study of the association between well-being and quality of life and discuss the outcomes of the organizations that apply well-being concepts to improve quality of life within the organization at the individual and organization level. The expected benefits of this study would increase an understanding of well-being and quality of life. In addition, this study would be beneficial to any further study on the development of well-being at the individual or organizational level.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Holistic Well-being Concepts**

There are lots of literatures that define the concepts of well-being. World Health Organization (1948) defines the well-being concept as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes the abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to the community." Meanwhile, the researcher studies the holistic well-being concepts in terms of Western, Eastern, and Buddhism concepts as follows:

#### ***The Definition of Well-being based on Western Concepts***

The concept of well-being occurs as an important concept in almost every period and country worldwide, including in western countries. Consequently, many thinkers and philosophers have studied various opinions about well-being in the western world. Their efforts to understand and explain well-being perspectives have revealed different definitions. Moreover, from the ancient Greek era to modern times, well-being forms an interesting research topic in various fields, including philosophy, psychology, economics, sociology, and religious science.

From the ancient Greek philosophy era until the approach of positive psychology, the concept of well-being has been defined from two perspectives: Hedonism (Subjective well-being) and Eudemonism (Psychological well-being) (Keyes et al., 2002). Subjective well-being (SWB) is an assessment of life satisfaction and the balance between positive and negative influences. Psychological well-being (PWB) means awareness of the challenges that exist in life. Aristotle emphasized in Nicomachean ethics that happiness can be reached by revealing its potential through activities appropriate to the virtue (Aristoteles & Rackham, 1999). According to Fromm, happiness and human development are possible only by interacting with other people if one lives in solidarity with them. A definition of well-being in the West is when

a person realizes that he is happy overall, appreciates life's value, and has a healthy and strong body. Well-being is a balanced connection between body, mind, society, and spirituality. Well-being reflects how to live a quality, happy and satisfied life. Therefore, good well-being has been deemed a path leading people to happiness and various successes.

Well-being means a positive emotional and mental state wherein one generally experiences more comfortable and positive and less negative feelings (Demirci, I. & Eksi, H., 2018). This includes the state wherein one is pleased with one's life because of the balanced connection between body, mind, society, and spirituality.

According to research studies, well-being in the West has been seen through two different perspectives: Subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Studies on well-being (Kingelbach M.L. & Berridge K.C., 2010) have found that subjective and psychological well-being dimensions are related, although these two perspectives empirically differ.

### Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being means evaluating a person's stories in both wisdom and emotional aspects. Subjective well-being is a broad concept consisting of having experienced a positive effect, having a low level of negative affect, and having a high level of life satisfaction. Subjective well-being measurements measure this: the Life Satisfaction measurement of Diener and others (1985) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule of Ingrid Brdar and others (1970).

According to the evaluation of a person's life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999), subjective well-being is a result of a personal evaluation. In other words, to evaluate if a person achieves his desires and goals or not. A person will be happy when achieving the needs and goals. Thus, subjective well-being is happiness created from a personal belief that person receives the desires.

Studies show that the level of subjective well-being in western societies is higher than that in Asian societies; this is because an individual's culture affects the understanding of happiness and how it is experienced (Diener et al., 1995). Furthermore, while people from individualistic cultures tend to have feelings that provide high stimulation, like excitement and enthusiasm, people from communitarian cultures appear to have feelings that provide low stimulation, like calmness, comfort, and peace (Tsai et al., 2006).

### Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being means the feelings and emotions of a person doing anything that truly responds to his needs. The needs are influenced by the value, self-identity, and inner desire to achieve supremacy. The questionnaire measures this for the Eudaimonic Well-being of Waterman and others (2010). It is the happiness of doing what correlates with one's inner desires without expecting any possible results in the future. This happiness occurs from inner self-realization, which combines a person's inner values and desires. The values and desires can be different depending on a person. Therefore, psychological well-being is deemed an important indicator promoting quality of life for all ages.

Psychological well-being consists of six key elements: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. It is stated that these six elements will combinedly specify psychological well-being in both positive emotion and healthy body aspects. Psychological well-being also correlates with a person's well-being more than Subjective well-being because the influence of psychological well-being affects survival behavior and environmental adaptation behavior.

### ***The Definition of Well-being based on Eastern Concepts***

Based on the question "What is your ultimate goal in life?", the predictable answer may receive are happiness. Although changing the question to "what is the fundamental need in life", the answers would probably be the same even in different contexts (such as one of the four requisites) but lead to the same answer, happiness, denoting the importance of happiness as almost the only thing people truly need in their lives. Nevertheless, the definition of happiness is still wide and unclear as it can define differently by each person.

Scopes and meanings of happiness were mentioned in various ways. First, the study from The Center for Bhutan Studies (2004) defined it as "a state of well-being and contentment" in which well-being will define happiness in a more external dimension while contentment will become a component more internal one that is the inner joy of satisfaction. Well-being will address grosser and less profound aspects of human nature as a living thing, whereas contentment will address subtler and more profound aspects. Both dimensions refer to a basic aspect of the nature as conscious human beings whose bodies and souls are in one unit that depends upon each other.

Life satisfaction or well-being was stated more when King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck introduced the concept of 'Gross National Happiness (GNH)', one of the most notable theories that apply happiness to measure how successful the Bhutan nation was in the 1960s (Veenhoven, 2013). GNH, the new concept of Macro Economics based on Buddhism belief, is a global indicator of a sustainable economy and social development. GNH concept was developed based on the notion that 'naturally, human beings seek physical and psychological well-being. Therefore, GNH aims to fulfill this purpose of the population in the nation.

GNH is based on four pillars and nine dimensions. Four pillars are the principles of this concept. The first pillar describes 'Sustainable Economic Development. This notion does not aim to deny any former economic indicators but adds cultural and well-being aspects to the economic consideration to create sustainability and equality regarding the nation's population and culture. Most Bhutanese live their lives by spending fewer resources but have much life satisfaction following the concept of a sufficiency economy. The second pillar is about 'Conservation of the Environment' denotes that any developmental activity must destroy the balancing of human beings and nature. Bhutan was regarded by the United Nations as the forefront nation of environmental conservation, with more than 70 percent of the country's forest area, and has a high level of biodiversity for both plants and animals. The third pillar mentions 'Promotion of National Culture', which promotes and maintains human values such as kindness, sacrifice, humility, forgiveness, and honor. Bhutanese children are taught religion,

traditions, culture, and academic knowledge. The fourth pillar represents by the term 'Good Governance,' which is one of the important foundations of sustainability under the principles of GNH. Good Governance will build confidence in the leader and finally result in the people having more happiness.

The study from the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research (2016) mentions that nine dimensions are used as the indicators to measure Bhutanese in different aspects as follows:

1. Psychological well-being:

This dimension tries to understand how people experience the quality of their lives. It includes reflective cognitive evaluations such as life satisfaction, positive emotions, and negative emotions.

2. Health:

This dimension contains the conditions of the human body and mind to characterize health by including both physical and psychological states. A healthy quality of life could get through daily activities without excessive fatigue or physical stress.

3. Time use:

This dimension analyses the nature of time expenditure on work, non-work, and sleep to highlight the significance of maintaining a harmonious work-life balance.

4. Education:

Apart from incorporating formal and informal education, this dimension also assesses different types of informal knowledge and skills.

5. Cultural diversity and resilience:

The cultural dimension includes the diversity and strength of cultural traditions such as festivals, norms, and the creative arts.

6. Community vitality:

This dimension emphasizes the strengths and weaknesses of relationships and interactions within communities. In addition, this dimension collects information on social relationships between family members and neighbors.

7. Good Governance:

The dimension of good Governance assesses how people perceive different governmental functions regarding their efficacy, honesty, and quality. Indicators measure the level of participation in government decisions at the local level and the presence of various rights and freedom.

8. Ecological diversity and resilience:

This dimension refers to indicators that measure people's measures of the environmental conditions of their neighborhood and assess eco-friendly behavior patterns. It also includes hazards such as forest fires and earthquakes.

9. Living standards:

This dimension includes the level of material comfort as evaluated by income, conditions of financial security, housing, and asset ownership.

Those are the common definitions and information of well-being in Eastern concepts that the researcher considers useful for the study.



### ***The Definition of Well-being based on Buddhist Principles***

In Buddhist Principles, there are various concepts and theories to explain holistic well-being. Details are as follows:

Phramaha Hansa Dhammhaso (2011) has mentioned Buddhist means of integrated health development in physical and mental dimensions. Buddhism emphasizes development in 4 dimensions which are physical, moral, emotional, and intellectual. He has presented four methods of integrated health development as follows:

1. Physical development by considering factors to encourage physical health: food, exercise, medicine, and operation.
2. Moral development by not harming both themselves and other
3. Psychological development or cultivation of heart by making sure to have a strong mind, peaceful and calm
4. Intellectual development or cultivation of wisdom will help people to be able to consider things truthfully and build knowledge, thinking skills, and decision-making skills.

Furthermore, integrated well-being in western concepts and practices also concluded that the definition of 'life' consists of 4 aspects: body, mind, society, and soul, which is quite close to Buddhism's physical and mental concepts.

Mahatthanadull (2019) studied the research work so-called "the balanced way of life with holistic well-being promotion according to Buddhist Psychology." The results illustrate that well-being includes four aspects which are body, social morals, calm mind, and wisdom. Such findings show the balanced way of life when human's desires are accomplished according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, including physiological, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs.

Phramaha Sakol Doenchaban (2015) has studied 'Peaceful Health Care Based on Buddhist Philosophy' and found that the medical field tends to develop and study more about peaceful healthcare by emphasizing both physical and mental. Well-being or health would consist of 4 dimensions which are physical, emotional, moral, and intellectual well-being. Well-being is taking care of, protecting, and healing physical, social, and emotional; therefore, people would have to adapt to using Buddhist means to be part of taking care of, protecting, and healing their lives. Even when physical is not healthy and cannot be healed, the Lord Buddha still emphasizes healing your mind and emotions; for example, there was one monk who was seriously ill, the Lord Buddha still tried to heal that monk's mind and said, "Through serious physical pain, your mind is still able to be developed to achieve fair" per Buddhist proverb "The mind is leading of all things."

Sangasumana (2019) has studied "The Buddhist perspective on measuring well-being and happiness in sustainable development." The study mentioned that The Buddhist view of well-being is more powerful than any other definition that emphasizes four interdependent aspects: material, social, mental, and spiritual. This can be nicely explained with the Dhammapada verse 204;

- The material well-being Satisfaction with the available resources
- Mental well-being: Satisfaction with the freedom
- Social well-being: Satisfaction with the relationships

- Spiritual well-being: Satisfaction with the spiritual practice

***The Holistic Well-being Definition***

This study has introduced a definition of holistic well-being. The definition includes concepts from Western, Eastern, and Buddhism. In conclusion, there are four distinct domains of holistic well-being: physical, behavioral, psychological, and intellectual. Regarding the study from Jiwattanasuk, N. (2001), the framework of the four mentioned aspects could be explained as follows:

**Table 1**

*Definition of the Holistic well-being*

Peaceful Well-being	Definition		
	Western	Eastern	Buddhism
1. Physical	Subjective Well-being Psychological Well-being	Health	Physical
2. Behaviour	Subjective Well-being Psychological Well-being	Cultural diversity and resilience Good governance Community vitality Environment Standard of living	Moral
3. Psychological	Psychological Well-being	Psychological	Psychological
4. Intellectual	Psychological Well-being	Use of time	Intellectual

To illustrate, the meanings of each aspect are described as follows:

**Physical well-being:** In this study, it focuses solely on physical health. Physical parts of the body can function normally, not malfunction. Functioning normally means a person does not have a disease or feels a lack of energy.

**Behavior well-being:** Holistic well-being in this aspect focuses on the Buddhist concept. The characteristics of behavior well-being include talking and acting nicely to others and being in harmony with everyone. More importantly, the way they talk or act is no harm to themselves and others, such as family members, subordinates, upper-level executives, clients, and general people.

From the Eastern perspective, it mentions environment or external factors; this study does not include it in this area because the objective of the study is to develop holistic well-being for meditation practitioners, which is personal development.

**Psychological well-being:** This study defines psychological well-being as a good state of mind and good thought. A good state of mind includes delightfulness, cheerfulness, no stress, no depression, no greed, no hatred, and delusion.

**Intellectual well-being:** Holistic well-being from an intellectual perspective means that a person has the wisdom to deal with any difficulty or challenge, make a decision effectively, and understand and manage one's life well.



### **The Holistic Well-being Concepts with the Quality of Life**

From the holistic well-being mentioned in this study, well-being is clarified into four perspectives: physical, behavioral, Psychological, and Intellectual. Several papers (Uysal et al., 2016); (Konu & Pesonen, 2018) mention that well-being is associated with quality of life. In particular, if any people, organization, social community, or country improves well-being, quality of life will be better. Quality of life (QOL) is defined by the World Health Organization (1948) as "an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and about their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns." The study from Post (2014) states the meaning of quality of life as four dimensions which are:

1. Physical health in terms of symptoms, treatment side effects, bodily sensations
2. Mental health includes a positive sense of well-being
3. Social health includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects of interactions
4. Functional health, including both physical functioning regarding self-care and physical activity and the social role of work-life balance

The study from Paz et al. (2020) mentions well-being in relation to the quality of life in the organization. The results show that if companies try to improve the well-being and quality of life of their employees, the overall well-being and quality of life in the organization would be improved as well. This study discusses the association between well-being and quality of Life from 2 perspectives which are Individual and Organization.

### ***The Holistic Well-being Concepts with the Quality of Life – Individual Perspective***

This study emphasizes three aspects -namely, physical health, mental health, and social health. The study could summarize the holistic well-being concerning the quality of life as follow:

1. Physical health

The study from Holder (2019) mentions that high well-being impacts physical health improvements such as blood pressure and immune competence. Exercise could promote physical health and improve the quality of life (Penedo & Dahn, 2005). Physical health intervention is also created by consuming healthy food (Ares et al., 2014). The result gathered in that study shows improvement in well-being when eating foods. Apart from this, mindfulness intervention also promotes physical health (Creswell et., al, 2014). Examples of physical health by mindfulness programs include improvement of blood pressure (Mocerri & Cox, 2019), chronic diseases (Merkes, 2010), and gastrointestinal and digestive function (Asare & Simren, 2011).

2. Mental health

Healthy well-being affects mental health, such as positive emotions, and reduces anxiety. Various papers state the burgeoning empirical study about mental health interventions that can promote psychological well-being. One example of a study (Williams et al., 2018) mentions that group singing interventions for people can develop well-being that eventually creates mental health. Such a study indicates that singing can help people with mental health

improve anxiety and depression conditions. Another example of mindfulness intervention impacts positive well-being and promotes healthy sleep quality and mental health (Howell et al., 2008).

### 3. High Quality of Social Life

Strong holistic well-being could support a positive social life. The study by Merz and Huxhold (2010) explores that people with a high-quality relationships with others are associated with positive well-being. Moreover, people with promising well-being will have a high-quality relationships with their family, colleague, and friends. People know how to talk with others and what actions people should take with others carefully. Therefore, high-quality relationships with family and friends will occur. The ADAMS and colleagues (2010) study also show that many older adults with social participation will generate high well-being. Such a study confirms that a high quality of social life is associated with well-being.

Well-being is usually presented as a concept and quality of life (Pinto et al., 2017). All aspects of physical health, mental health, and quality of social life show positive, healthy holistic well-being. Recently, the development of well-being shall apply to individuals, institutions, and countries.

### *The Holistic Well-being Concepts with the Quality of Life – Organizational Perspective*

Examples of institutions that study and apply well-being concepts to improve quality of life are provided below:

#### 1. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Health Risk Control I Section and Thai Health Promotion Foundation

One of the objectives of this organization is to reduce integrated Buddhist risk factors and develop a recommendation for the risk mitigation of well-being using Buddhist principles. This is to improve the well-being of individuals and their social life. Quality of life will be better.

#### 2. Well-being Research Centre, University of Oxford, London

A brand-new research center coordinated with the University of Oxford to implement the science of well-being to improve quality of life. This is the world-leading center for research in the disciplines of social sciences. Several areas in this institution include Covid19, aid, poverty, sustainable development, peace, family, education, community, and global health.

#### 3. Center for Wellness and Health Promotion, Harvard University, USA

The center enhances holistic well-being through educational experiences. The main factors are the eight dimensions of well-being, knowing what works for specific person, and living with compassion and a sense of humor. Accordingly, the well-being framework includes emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, physical, relational, spiritual, and vocational. In addition, the center offers a wide range of services such as exercise, meditation, and yoga classes to improve human beings' well-being.

#### 4. Johnson & Johnson company

The company believes mental health influences the physical, social, and economic health of individuals and societies worldwide. As a result, Johnson & Johnson has been

dedicated to developing results for people with mental illness. Presently, the company expands its operation to build mental health care with programs that are contributing resources to support health workers worldwide.

5. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a Federal Government

The Department set aside the project so-called Health People 2020, providing science-based for a decade. This project is to develop the health of all Americans. Within 2030, there will be a health-related quality of life and well-being. Developing well-being emphasizes an individual's physical, psychological, and social sides. Details are described as follows:

Healthy People 2020 states that "Overarching Goals include:

- Attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death.
- Achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups.
- Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all.
- Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages."

### ***Implications for Organizational Practices***

The abovementioned institutions show that holistic well-being has become an interesting topic nowadays. This confirms that the relationship between institutions and well-being could offer the consequent conditions to eventually improve quality of life (Bennett et al., 2016). Upton (2015) also mentions the relationship between quality of life and well-being. Moreover, the study from Camfield (2014) affirms the association between well-being and quality of life through concept definitions. In other words, in the organizations that promote well-being, the employees will have good physical and mental health, and healthy relationships with managers. United Nations mentioned Sustainable Development Goals are also derived from physical and mental health (Sheehan et al., 2017). Additionally, the study from Jackson, T. (2009) mentions sustainable growth in an organization is also developed from the physical health, mental health, and social health. With this evidence, the organizations that emphasize well-being development would promote sustainable growth. As seen from these benefits, it encourages the organization to apply well-being concepts to promote the quality of life from both individual and organizational perspectives.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the well-being concepts from Western, Eastern, and Buddhism, this study has introduced a definition of holistic well-being that are four distinct domains: physical, behavioral, psychological, and intellectual. It is clear from the research reviewed that well-being leads to quality of life. From an individual perspective, well-being leads to good physical and mental health as well as good quality of social life. When reviewing the organization perspective, it is found that many reputation organizations emphasize the well-being program and as a result of introducing a well-being program in the organization, it develops a good quality of life, good physical and mental health in employees, good relationships within

employees' families, and the effectiveness and efficiency within the organization then subsequently resulting in the long-term sustainable success of the company. It seems that applying well-being programs have become a strategic direction for many companies regardless of their size. It would be beneficial to study further to examine factors that make a well-being program effective and the practical approach that leads to sustainable well-being for individuals and sustainable success for organizations.

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