

## A narrative assessment of public health perspectives on human well-being

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### Abstract

**Background:** Human Wellbeing (HWB) is synonymous with health and should be included when assessing health status at the individual and community levels.

**Methods:** In this narrative literature mini review, Google Scholar and PubMed were searched for published full-text English publications and websites that included the keywords wellbeing, definition, types, measurement, and importance. All collected literature was evaluated for inclusion in the review. The most relevant articles were selected.

**Results:** This mini review outlines the various definitions of HWB and associated concepts. The aspects and public health benefits of well-being (WB) were discussed. The many tools used to measure HWB were listed. Finally, the public health concerns associated with WB were described.

**Conclusion:** There is a need for effective collaboration among public health specialists, psychologists, sociologists, and physicians to operationally define the various socially and culturally relevant terminology associated with WB, which should be considered more than the absence of disease.

**Keywords:** Wellbeing, Human wellbeing, Sustainable development goal, Individual wellbeing, Community wellbeing, Health, Happiness, Wellness, Quality of life, Public Health

### Introduction

The concept of well-being is part of development. The concept of human wellbeing (HWB) and its contribution to human life is gaining popularity worldwide (1). HWB is difficult to define and measure. It is a multidimensional term encompassing various perspectives and concepts. However, it is related to both physical and mental health. In psychology and social sciences, HWB is defined more generally as satisfying desires, being happy, and living well or flourishing (2).

HWB is intimately tied to sustainable development goals (SDGs), and strong positive correlations have been shown between self-reported measures of HWB and accomplishing SDGs, as well as an increase in

HWB returns to SDGs (3). SDG 3 assures healthy living and promotes HWB for everyone. Health and HWB are the goals of this goal as well as the outcome of previous goals (4).

The notion of HWB is broad and multidisciplinary, with subjective and objective components, including life satisfaction as well as positive and negative emotions (5).

Psychological HWB is based on personal evaluations of enjoyment, social or economic success, and harmony with oneself and others, while physical HWB is based on good health and meeting the necessities (6).

Work has a beneficial and negative impact on health and well-being. A previous study indicated that work has an impact on all elements of health (7).

Several attempts have been made over the years to measure the multidimensional characteristics of HWB. This narrative review examines HWB from a public health standpoint.

## Methods

Google Scholar and PubMed were searched for published full-text English papers and webpages using the key phrases "wellbeing" in combination with "definition", "types", "measurement", "importance", and "challenges" up to January 23, 2024. These combinations were created using the Boolean operators 'AND' and 'OR'.

All collected literature was evaluated for inclusion in the review. We selected the most relevant articles.

## Definition

HWB can be defined in a variety of ways, including health, standard of living, human welfare, happiness, and quality of life. HWB is defined as a sense of vitality and health resulting from one's ideas, emotions, behaviors, feelings of well-being, and experiences. Wellbeing (WB) refers to feeling socially connected, happy, healthy, and meaningful most of the time (8,9). WB is defined as the development of one or more of five elements: engagement, positive feeling, meaning, relationships, and accomplishments (10).

## HWB and related terms

WB refers to a variety of ideas, including health, welfare, wellbeing, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-determination, resilience, quality of life, mood enhancement, positive mental health, life satisfaction, and worthwhileness (11, 12).

*Health:* According to the World Health Organization, health is "a state of complete physical, social, and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity," and it is a positive state for individuals and societies. It is influenced by economic, social, and environmental factors. Health is a fundamental human right (13).

The WB idea is intimately tied to mental health, and there is a two-way relationship in which the WB is both a predictor of health and a consequence of it. Mental health is a positive notion that refers to the emotional and social well-being of individuals and populations. Being mentally healthy or having good mental health refers to a general condition of well-being (14,15).

*Happiness:* It is normal to think about WB as similar to happiness. However, they have different meanings. There are three sorts of happiness: life satisfaction, pleasant feelings, and low negative feelings (9). Happiness represents a person's feelings from moment to moment, whereas WB contains happiness as well as how pleased people are with their lives, sense of independence in control of their lives, and purpose in life. Subjective well-being (SWB) is the scientific word for happiness (16, 17).

*Wellness* is an active process of transformation and progress to achieve optimal health and well-being (18). It is a self-directed, purposeful, and ongoing process of individuals realizing their full potential to live a good and affirming life (19). Wellness encompasses a wide range of activities, including job satisfaction, physical activity, a healthy diet, and nutrition, abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, contributing to the environment and community, creativity and mental activities, the purpose of human existence, and, finally, accepting one's own feelings (19,20).

*Quality of life (QOL):* WB takes into account quality of life and the contributions of individuals and societies to the global community. This encompasses prospering, equitable resource allocation, and sustainability (13). QOL is described as an individual's entire enjoyment of life, including their sense of well-being and ability to perform daily living activities. It refers to the perceived physical and mental health of an individual or group over time (21).

## Pillars of WB

Here are the five pillars of personal well-being that should be examined collectively to create balance (9,22,23):

- 1- Emotional, mental, or psychological well-being (feeling joyful): is the ability to manage and cope with stress while being resilient and cognizant of positive emotions.
- 2- Physical WB (feel healthy): This involves appropriate food, physical activity, and adequate sleep to promote bodily function.
- 3- Social WB (feel connected): The ability to converse and build intimacy with people. This requires social abilities such as kindness, gratitude, and communication.

4- Workplace WB (fulfilled at work): It refers to how employees feel about their jobs and seeks to assure their safety, satisfaction, health, and engagement. It contains hobbies, purpose, and work skills that lead to satisfaction, meaning, and enrichment.

5- Societal WB (feeling of community) refers to active participation in the creation of community, culture, and environment.

HWB is also classified as personal or individual WB and community or national WB. Well-being has been related to success on the personal, professional, and interpersonal levels. Individuals with high well-being are more productive at work, effective scholars, creative, responsible, and have positive relationships (24,25,26). Community well-being is a set of social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors that individuals and communities see as necessary for them to reach their full potential and thrive (27).

#### Measurement of HWB

There are numerous techniques available to assess subjective and psychological well-being at both the individual and community levels. Neither of them is ideal; each has advantages and disadvantages.

##### Measuring individual WB:

It is critical to assess good affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. A person with a high subjective (hedonic) WB experience more pleasant than negative emotions and is content with life. The psychological or eudaimonic WB emphasizes achieving one's full potential through psychological growth and development (28,29).

There are numerous Hedonic scales that assess psychological and emotional well-being, including the Subjective Happiness Scale, Scale of Positive and Negative Experience, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Negative and Positive Affect Scale, and the International Wellbeing Index (IWI).

Eudaimonic well-being measures include the Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Wellbeing, Flourishing Scale, Meaning in Life Questionnaire, Social Wellbeing Scale, The Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing, Brief Version of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire, Fragility of Happiness, Fear of Happiness Scale, Individualism, The 5-item World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5), and Collectivism Scale (17,30,31).

##### Measuring community WB:

Many countries gather data on certain indices of objective WB, like as income, life expectancy, educational achievement, and safety. Some countries routinely collect statistics on subjective WB indicators including life satisfaction and happiness (32).

There are many measures of WB at community levels, none of which are satisfactory, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Human Wellbeing Index (HWBI), Human Development Index (HDI), Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW), Education Achievements, Gender Inequality Index, Gross National Income, Population Trends, The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), Health Outcomes, Human Security, Job Security, quality of family life, personal physical security ratings, Climate, the state of political liberties; quality of community life and government (1,33-36).

#### Public health benefits of wellbeing

Researchers discovered that people who are happy and have a positive subjective well-being are more likely to be healthier, live longer, have better social interactions, and work more efficiently. Thus, those with high subjective WB function more effectively than those who are depressed, chronically worried, or furious (17, 37).

Positive emotions reduce tension and encourage relaxation, which helps with stress management. It has been shown that subjective WB is associated with a lower risk of heart disease and stroke, faster recovery from sickness, and increased use of health-promoting behaviors. According to research, those who experience happy emotions are more creative and productive. They make more money, collaborate with others, are less prone to participate in dangerous activities, and have stronger social interactions (3,5,38-41).

#### Public health Challenges related to wellbeing

HWB is a vague concept that defies easy and unambiguous description. Understanding its structure and nature is one of the difficulties in philosophy and social science research. The public health challenges of WB can be characterized as follows:

- Development of culturally sensitive tools in local languages for measuring personal WB throughout the life cycle and at various physiological and pathological situations. This allows for the tracking of trends over time as well as comparisons between individuals.

- WB indicators at the community level are being developed to allow for comparisons between cultures and time periods.

- Wellbeing is the state of having happy sentiments and realizing one's full potential in the world. It can be quantified subjectively and objectively, but a salutogenic approach (wellness that focuses on health rather than disease) is difficult to quantify.

- For public health objectives, there is a need for consensus on the differences and overlap between the related words of health, wellbeing, wellness, happiness, and quality of life.

- More research on the social, economic, behavioral, cultural, religious, and clinical factors of wellbeing and related concepts.

- Pay special attention to neglected groups such as marginalized people, ethnic minorities, refugees, migrants, slum dwellers, women in particular cultures, and certain occupational groups.

### Conclusion

WB is a complicated, transdisciplinary notion. It is used interchangeably with health and should be considered when assessing health status at the individual and community levels. There is a need for effective collaboration among public health specialists, psychologists, sociologists, and doctors to operationally define the various words associated with wellbeing, which should be viewed as more than the absence of pathology. This terminology must be socially and culturally appropriate for the religious setting.

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