# Perspectives on Psychological Well-Being: A Critical Review

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## Abstract

Psychological well-being (PWB) represents a multidimensional construct central to theoretical debates within positive psychology and mental health research. This review critically examines dominant perspectives on PWB, with particular emphasis on the distinction between hedonic and eudemonic traditions. Key theoretical frameworks, including Ryff's model of psychological well-being and Self-Determination Theory, are analysed to elucidate core dimensions of optimal functioning. The review also addresses theoretical ambiguities, measurement challenges, and cultural and developmental considerations that complicate the conceptualization of PWB. By synthesizing diverse theoretical perspectives, the paper highlights conceptual gaps and proposes directions for advancing theory-driven research in psychological well-being.

## 1. Introduction

Psychological well-being (PWB) has emerged as a central construct within psychology as the discipline has progressively moved beyond an exclusive focus on psychopathology toward a more comprehensive understanding of human functioning. Rather than defining mental health solely by the absence of distress or disorder, contemporary approaches emphasize positive psychological functioning, personal growth, and the realization of human potential. In this context, PWB reflects the ways in which individuals evaluate and experience their lives, including their sense of purpose, quality of interpersonal relationships, self-acceptance, and capacity to manage life's challenges.

The conceptualization of psychological well-being is theoretically diverse and has been shaped by multiple intellectual traditions. Early distinctions between hedonic and eudemonic perspectives continue to influence the field, with hedonic approaches emphasizing happiness, pleasure, and life satisfaction, and eudemonic approaches focusing on meaning, self-realization, and optimal functioning. These perspectives have informed influential theoretical frameworks such as Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being and Self-Determination Theory, both of which conceptualize well-being as a complex and dynamic process rather than a static outcome. Despite significant empirical support, debates persist regarding conceptual clarity, dimensional overlap, and the universality of these models across cultural and developmental contexts.

Moreover, psychological well-being is increasingly recognized as being shaped by a range of internal and external factors, including personality, coping processes, social relationships, cultural values, and structural conditions such as socioeconomic status. This growing recognition has prompted calls for integrative and context-sensitive approaches that account for both individual agency and broader social determinants.

The present review aims to critically examine dominant perspectives on psychological well-being by evaluating key theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical findings. By identifying conceptual ambiguities, measurement challenges, and underexplored areas, this paper seeks to highlight emerging trends and propose directions for advancing theory-driven and culturally informed research on psychological well-being.

## 2. Conceptual Foundations:

### 2.1 Hedonic and Eudemonic Approaches to Psychological Well-Being:

Conceptualizations of psychological well-being have been predominantly shaped by two philosophical traditions: hedonic and eudemonic perspectives. The hedonic approach, rooted in the ideas of Aristippus and later utilitarian philosophy, conceptualizes well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance. In contemporary psychology, this perspective is operationalized as subjective well-being (SWB), comprising positive affect, low negative affect, and life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). Hedonic models emphasize individuals' evaluative and emotional experiences of life, making them particularly useful for large-scale surveys and policy-oriented research. However, critics argue that an exclusive focus on happiness and satisfaction may neglect deeper dimensions of human functioning, such as personal growth, moral development, and meaning.

In contrast, the eudemonic approach draws from Aristotle's concept of *eudemonia*, which emphasizes living in accordance with one's true self, values, and purpose. Psychological models grounded in this tradition, such as Ryff's multidimensional framework, highlight autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance as core components of well-being. Eudemonic theorists contend that well-being is not merely about feeling good but about functioning well and realizing one's potential, even in the presence of adversity. This perspective has been particularly influential in clinical, developmental, and occupational psychology, where resilience, meaning, and engagement are central concerns.

Despite their conceptual distinctions, the hedonic–eudemonic dichotomy has been increasingly critiqued as overly simplistic. Empirical evidence suggests substantial overlap between affective happiness and meaningful engagement, prompting calls for integrative frameworks. Contemporary models increasingly view psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing both experiential (hedonic) and functional (eudemonic) elements. Such integrative perspectives offer a more comprehensive understanding of well-being, acknowledging that optimal psychological functioning involves not only pleasure and satisfaction but also purpose, growth, and sustained engagement with life's challenges.

## 3. Theoretical Perspective:

The conceptualization of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) has evolved through multiple theoretical traditions, reflecting diverse assumptions about optimal human functioning. Prominent among these are eudemonic frameworks that emphasize meaning and self-realization, and hedonic approaches that focus on happiness and life satisfaction. This section critically reviews key theoretical perspectives, with particular attention to Ryff's Six-Factor Model, Self-Determination Theory, and other influential models within positive psychology.

### 3.1 Ryff's Six-Factor Model of Psychological Well-Being:

Carol Ryff's (1989) Six-Factor Model represents one of the most comprehensive and influential eudemonic frameworks of psychological well-being. Grounded in humanistic, existential, and developmental theories, the model conceptualizes well-being as optimal psychological functioning rather than mere happiness. Ryff identified six core dimensions: self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, and autonomy. Together, these dimensions capture individuals' capacity for self-realization, effective functioning, and meaningful engagement with life.

A major strength of Ryff's model lies in its strong theoretical grounding and multidimensional structure, which challenged the dominance of hedonic approaches that equated well-being with pleasure or satisfaction. The development of standardized and widely used measurement scales further advanced empirical research, allowing for cross-sectional and longitudinal investigations across diverse populations. Empirical studies have linked Ryff's dimensions to physical health, resilience, occupational functioning, and mental health outcomes, reinforcing the model's relevance across applied contexts.

However, the model has also attracted critical scrutiny. One key concern relates to conceptual and empirical overlap among dimensions, particularly between personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, raising questions about discriminant validity. Factor-analytic studies have produced mixed results, with some failing to replicate the six-factor structure consistently. Additionally, critics argue that the model reflects Western, individualistic values, particularly in its emphasis on autonomy and personal growth, which may limit its cultural generalizability in collectivistic contexts. Despite these limitations, Ryff's model remains a cornerstone of PWB research and continues to inform theory development and applied interventions.

### 3.2 Self-Determination Theory:

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) offers a complementary yet distinct perspective on psychological well-being by emphasizing universal psychological needs that underpin motivation and development. SDT posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are innate and essential for psychological growth, integrity, and well-being. Well-being, from this perspective, emerges when social environments support these basic needs, fostering intrinsic motivation and self-endorsed behaviour.

A key contribution of SDT is its integration of individual functioning with social and contextual influences. Unlike trait-based models, SDT highlights the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environments, making it particularly useful for understanding well-being in organizational, educational, and healthcare settings. Empirical evidence across cultures supports the centrality of need satisfaction in predicting psychological well-being, vitality, and mental health.

Nevertheless, SDT has been critiqued for its claim of universality, as the experience and expression of autonomy may vary culturally. Some scholars argue that SDT's conceptualization of autonomy remains rooted in Western notions of independence, despite efforts to frame it as volitional functioning rather than individualism. Additionally, SDT focuses primarily on mechanisms of well-being rather than offering a broad descriptive framework, which may limit its use as a comprehensive model of PWB.

### 3.3 Other Theoretical Models:

Beyond Ryff's model and SDT, several other frameworks have shaped contemporary understandings of psychological well-being. Seligman's PERMA model (2011), rooted in positive psychology, conceptualizes well-being as comprising Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. PERMA's strengths-based and intervention-oriented approach has been influential in applied settings; however, critics note that it lacks a strong theoretical foundation and overlaps conceptually with existing models of well-being.

In contrast, the Subjective Well-Being (SWB) approach (Diener et al., 1999) represents a hedonic tradition, focusing on life satisfaction and affective balance. While SWB has demonstrated robust predictive validity and methodological simplicity, it has been criticized for neglecting deeper aspects of meaning, growth, and moral functioning. Consequently, contemporary scholarship increasingly advocates for integrative approaches that combine hedonic and eudemonic perspectives.

In sum, theoretical models of psychological well-being offer valuable yet partial insights. A critical synthesis of these perspectives is essential for advancing a more nuanced, culturally sensitive, and contextually grounded understanding of well-being.

## 4. Measurement of Psychological Well-Being:

The measurement of psychological well-being (PWB) represents a significant methodological challenge due to the conceptual plurality and theoretical diversity that characterize the construct. Unlike unidimensional indicators of mental health, PWB encompasses cognitive, emotional, and eudemonic dimensions, leading to the development of multiple instruments grounded in differing philosophical and empirical traditions. Consequently, no single measure comprehensively captures the full complexity of psychological well-being, necessitating a critical appraisal of existing tools.

Among the most influential instruments is **Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB)**, available in 42- and 84-item versions. Rooted in a eudemonic framework, Ryff's model operationalizes well-being across six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The scale has demonstrated strong theoretical grounding and extensive empirical use across diverse populations. However, critics have raised concerns regarding **dimensional overlap**, high inter-correlations among subscales, and inconsistent factor structures across cultures. These issues raise questions about whether the scale assesses distinct dimensions or reflects a broader general well-being factor. Additionally, the length of the scale may limit its feasibility in applied or clinical settings.

In contrast, the **Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)** developed by Diener adopts a **hedonic and cognitive-evaluative approach**, focusing on individuals' global judgments of life satisfaction. Its brevity, simplicity, and robust psychometric properties have contributed to its widespread use in large-scale surveys and cross-national research. However, the SWLS captures only one facet of well-being and does not account for emotional experiences, meaning, or personal growth. As a result, it may underestimate well-being in individuals who report life challenges yet experience strong purpose or psychological resilience.

The **Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)** emphasizes the affective dimension of well-being by assessing the frequency or intensity of positive and negative emotions. While PANAS is valuable for examining emotional states and short-term fluctuations in well-being, its focus on affect limits its ability to capture deeper, enduring aspects of psychological functioning. Moreover, the independence of positive and negative affect has been debated, particularly across cultural contexts where emotional experiences may be more dialectical.

More recently, the **PERMA Profiler**, based on Seligman's well-being theory, integrates five components—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—offering a more holistic perspective. The measure has been praised for its applicability in organizational and educational contexts; however, critics argue that its theoretical boundaries overlap with existing constructs and that empirical validation across non-Western populations remains limited.

Across these instruments, several **measurement challenges persist**, including cultural bias, response styles such as social desirability, and the tendency to rely heavily on self-report methods. Furthermore, most well-being measures are static, failing to capture the **dynamic and context-dependent nature of well-being over time**. To address these limitations, scholars increasingly advocate for **longitudinal designs, experience sampling methods, and mixed-methods approaches**, which enhance ecological validity and provide richer insights into how psychological well-being evolves across life contexts. A more integrative measurement strategy is essential for advancing theoretical clarity and empirical rigor in psychological well-being research.

## 5. Empirical Findings on Psychological Well-Being:

### 5.1 Individual Correlates:

At the individual level, personality traits have emerged as some of the most consistent predictors of PWB. Meta-analytic and longitudinal studies indicate that high extraversion and low neuroticism are strongly associated with higher levels of well-being. Extraversion is linked to positive affect, social engagement, and environmental mastery, whereas neuroticism is associated with emotional instability, negative affectivity, and vulnerability to stress. While these associations are robust, critics argue that the strong overlap between personality traits and well-being measures raises questions about conceptual redundancy and whether PWB represents a distinct construct or an extension of stable personality dispositions.

Cognitive appraisals also play a central role in shaping psychological well-being. Optimism, perceived control, and positive interpretations of life events have been consistently linked to higher PWB across diverse populations. Individuals who perceive themselves as capable of influencing outcomes tend to demonstrate greater autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth. However, much of the evidence relies on cross-sectional self-report designs, limiting causal inference. Moreover, excessive emphasis on individual cognition may underplay structural constraints that limit perceived control, particularly in disadvantaged contexts.

Coping strategies and emotion regulation further contribute to individual differences in PWB. Adaptive coping mechanisms—such as cognitive reappraisal, problem-solving, and acceptance—are positively associated with psychological well-being, whereas maladaptive strategies like rumination and avoidance predict poorer outcomes. Although these findings support intervention-based models, variability in coping definitions and measurement tools complicates cross-study comparisons and theoretical integration.

### 5.2 Social and Environmental Correlates:

Beyond individual factors, social and environmental contexts are critical determinants of psychological well-being. Strong social support networks, secure attachment relationships, and meaningful community engagement consistently predict higher PWB. Supportive relationships facilitate emotional regulation, reinforce self-worth, and buffer the impact of stressors, thereby enhancing dimensions such as positive relations with others and environmental mastery.

Socioeconomic resources—including income stability, educational opportunities, and access to healthcare—also play a significant role in shaping well-being. Individuals with greater resources generally report higher PWB, although the relationship is not linear and may be moderated by cultural values and social comparison processes. Despite strong empirical support, much of the literature adopts an individualistic framework, often failing to adequately address structural inequalities and systemic barriers that constrain well-being at the population level.

### 5.3 Psychological Well-Being and Health Outcomes:

A growing body of evidence links high PWB to favourable physical health outcomes, including reduced morbidity, enhanced immune functioning, and lower mortality risk. Longitudinal studies suggest that dimensions such as purpose in life and autonomy are particularly predictive of long-term health. Proposed mechanisms include improved stress regulation, engagement in health-promoting behaviours, and the availability of psychosocial resources.

Nevertheless, debates persist regarding directionality and causality. While higher PWB may promote better health, it is equally plausible that good health facilitates well-being. Additionally, biological pathways remain underexplored, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary research integrating psychological, physiological, and social perspectives.

## 6.Cultural and Contextual Considerations in Psychological Well-Being:

Contemporary research increasingly recognizes that psychological well-being (PWB) is not a culturally neutral construct but is deeply embedded within social, cultural, and historical contexts. Cross-cultural studies have demonstrated substantial variation in how well-being is conceptualized, experienced, and valued across societies, raising important questions about the universality of dominant Western models of PWB. While widely cited frameworks—such as Ryff's multidimensional model—have significantly advanced understanding of positive functioning, their applicability across diverse cultural contexts remains contested.

Western conceptualizations of psychological well-being tend to emphasize individual autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, and goal attainment. These values reflect broader cultural orientations toward independence, self-determination, and personal achievement that are characteristic of individualistic societies. Within such contexts, well-being is often understood as an intrapersonal state, rooted in personal agency, self-efficacy, and the realization of one's individual potential. Empirical research conducted in North America and Western Europe has consistently linked PWB to constructs such as self-esteem, independence, and personal mastery, reinforcing the prominence of individual-centered models.

In contrast, collectivist cultures, prevalent in many Asian, African, and Latin American societies, prioritize interdependence, social harmony, relational obligations, and collective goals. In these contexts, psychological well-being is less about individual fulfillment and more about maintaining balanced relationships, fulfilling social roles, and contributing to family and community welfare. Studies indicate that dimensions such as autonomy or

self-direction—central to Western models—may not hold the same psychological salience in collectivist settings and may even conflict with cultural norms emphasizing conformity and relational sensitivity. Consequently, well-being in collectivist cultures is often evaluated through interpersonal functioning, social connectedness, and perceived social support rather than personal achievement alone.

These cultural differences challenge the assumption that dominant models of psychological well-being are universally valid. Critics argue that applying Western-derived measures across cultures risks imposing ethnocentric values and overlooking culturally specific pathways to well-being. For instance, Ryff's emphasis on autonomy and personal growth may inadequately capture well-being in cultures where relational interdependence and social duty are more central to positive functioning. Cross-cultural validation studies have produced mixed findings, with some dimensions showing limited equivalence across cultural groups, underscoring the need for greater contextual sensitivity in PWB research.

Indigenous and non-Western perspectives further broaden the conceptualization of psychological well-being by emphasizing rationality, spirituality, connection to land, and collective identity as foundational elements. From these perspectives, well-being is viewed as inherently holistic, encompassing emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental dimensions. Psychological health is inseparable from community well-being, cultural continuity, and harmonious relationships with nature. Such frameworks challenge reductionist, individual-focused models and call for integrative approaches that recognize collective and spiritual dimensions of human flourishing.

In sum, cultural and contextual considerations are essential for a comprehensive understanding of psychological well-being. A critical review of PWB perspectives highlights the limitations of universalist models and underscores the need for culturally responsive frameworks that accommodate diverse values, lived experiences, and pathways to well-being. Future research must prioritize cross-cultural theory development, culturally grounded measurement tools, and inclusive methodologies to ensure that psychological well-being is understood in ways that are both scientifically rigorous and culturally meaningful.

## 7. Critical Issues and Debates in Psychological Well-Being Research:

Despite significant theoretical and empirical advancements, the field of psychological well-being (PWB) continues to grapple with several conceptual, methodological, and philosophical challenges. These debates are central to refining the construct and ensuring its relevance across diverse populations and contexts.

### 7.1 Conceptual Clarity and Theoretical Boundaries:

One of the most persistent debates in PWB research concerns its conceptual definition. Scholars differ on whether well-being should be understood primarily as subjective happiness and life satisfaction, as emphasized in hedonic traditions, or as optimal psychological functioning involving personal growth, autonomy, purpose in life, and positive relations, as articulated in eudemonic models. While frameworks such as Ryff's multidimensional model have advanced conceptual clarity, inconsistencies remain regarding whether well-being represents an outcome, a process, or a dynamic interaction between the two. The coexistence of multiple, sometimes overlapping constructs—such as happiness, flourishing, mental health, and quality of life—has further contributed to conceptual ambiguity. Consequently, there is growing consensus on the need for integrative models that reconcile subjective experiences with functional and contextual dimensions of well-being, rather than privileging a single theoretical perspective.

### 7.2 Measurement and Methodological Challenges:

Measurement issues present another critical concern in PWB research. The field has relied heavily on self-report instruments, which, although efficient and widely used, are vulnerable to social desirability bias, response styles, and cultural interpretation of items. Many existing scales may inadequately capture the depth and complexity of well-being, particularly across different sociocultural groups. Moreover, the dominance of cross-sectional research designs limits causal inference and obscures the dynamic and developmental nature of well-being over time. Longitudinal and mixed-method approaches remain underutilized, despite their potential to illuminate trajectories

of well-being and contextual influences. Additionally, insufficient cultural adaptation and validation of well-being measures have raised concerns regarding their applicability beyond Western populations, calling for more culturally sensitive and inclusive methodological practices.

### 7.3 Tension Between Positive Psychology and Pathology:

The rise of positive psychology has substantially shaped PWB research by shifting attention from pathology to strengths, resilience, and flourishing. However, critics argue that an overemphasis on positivity risks marginalizing experiences of suffering, distress, and structural adversity. This perspective may inadvertently promote an individualistic narrative in which responsibility for well-being rests solely on the person, neglecting contextual constraints. A more balanced and nuanced approach recognizes that psychological well-being does not imply the absence of distress but rather the capacity to navigate adversity meaningfully. Integrating insights from clinical psychology and trauma-informed perspectives can help bridge the divide between flourishing and suffering.

### 7.4 Socioeconomic and Structural Determinants of Well-Being:

Finally, scholars increasingly emphasize that PWB cannot be examined in isolation from socioeconomic and structural factors. Poverty, discrimination, occupational stress, and unequal access to resources significantly constrain individual opportunities for well-being. Critics caution against approaches that decontextualize psychological constructs from broader social realities. Addressing social determinants of well-being is essential for developing more equitable and ecologically valid models of PWB. Future research must integrate psychological processes with socio-political contexts to better understand how well-being is shaped, maintained, or undermined.

## 8.Interventions to Enhance Psychological Well-Being:

Interventions aimed at enhancing psychological well-being (PWB) have expanded considerably over the past two decades, reflecting the growing recognition that mental health extends beyond the absence of psychopathology to include positive functioning, meaning, and fulfillment. Evidence-based approaches to promoting PWB operate at individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal levels, drawing from diverse theoretical frameworks including positive psychology, mindfulness traditions, cognitive-behavioural theory, and socio-ecological models. While these interventions have demonstrated promise, their effectiveness is contingent upon contextual, cultural, and developmental sensitivity.

Positive psychology interventions (PPIs) represent one of the most extensively studied approaches to enhancing well-being. Techniques such as gratitude journaling, strengths identification and use, optimism training, and acts of kindness aim to cultivate positive emotions, engagement, and meaning. Meta-analytic evidence suggests that PPIs yield small to moderate improvements in well-being and reductions in depressive symptoms. However, critics argue that PPIs may overemphasize individual agency while neglecting structural constraints such as socioeconomic adversity and occupational stress. Moreover, the sustainability of gains from brief PPIs remains debated, particularly when interventions are implemented without integration into broader psychosocial contexts.

Mindfulness-based approaches, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), have gained substantial empirical support for enhancing emotional regulation, self-awareness, and psychological flexibility. These interventions align closely with eudemonic conceptions of PWB by fostering acceptance, present-moment awareness, and non-judgmental self-reflection. Research indicates that mindfulness practices can improve multiple dimensions of well-being, including autonomy and self-acceptance. Nevertheless, concerns have been raised regarding the secularization and de-contextualization of mindfulness from its ethical and cultural roots. Additionally, mindfulness may not be universally beneficial, particularly for individuals with unresolved trauma, underscoring the need for careful screening and adaptation.

Cognitive-behavioural strategies remain a cornerstone in interventions targeting psychological well-being. By identifying and restructuring maladaptive cognitions, enhancing problem-solving skills, and promoting behavioural activation, cognitive-behavioural interventions contribute to improved self-efficacy and purpose in life. While traditionally associated with symptom reduction, contemporary adaptations emphasize strengths-based

and well-being–oriented outcomes. However, critics note that cognitive-behavioural approaches may privilege rational cognition and underrepresent emotional, relational, and cultural dimensions of well-being.

Beyond individual-level interventions, community and policy-level strategies play a crucial role in promoting sustainable psychological well-being. Social support networks, community engagement programs, workplace well-being initiatives, and mental health–informed organizational policies address environmental determinants of PWB. Workplace interventions, for instance, have demonstrated positive effects on job satisfaction, engagement, and psychological health when they prioritize autonomy, work–life balance, and supportive leadership. Despite their potential, such interventions are often inconsistently implemented and insufficiently evaluated, particularly in low- and middle-income contexts.

Overall, the effectiveness of well-being interventions depends on their alignment with cultural values, developmental stages, and contextual realities. A critical perspective emphasizes the need to move beyond one-size-fits-all models toward integrative, culturally responsive, and multi-level approaches that address both individual capacities and structural conditions shaping psychological well-being.

## 9.Future Directions in Psychological Well-Being Research:

Future research on psychological well-being (PWB) is increasingly oriented toward integrative, multilevel frameworks that move beyond individualistic conceptualizations. While traditional models have predominantly emphasized intrapersonal factors such as personality traits, cognitive appraisals, and emotional regulation, emerging perspectives highlight the need to situate well-being within broader social, cultural, organizational, and structural contexts. Multilevel models that simultaneously examine individual characteristics, interpersonal relationships, institutional environments, and societal conditions offer a more comprehensive understanding of how well-being is produced, maintained, or undermined. Such approaches are particularly relevant in addressing social inequities, occupational stress, and systemic barriers that shape well-being across populations.

Longitudinal and developmental research represents another critical direction for advancing PWB scholarship. Much of the existing literature relies on cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inference and obscuring developmental trajectories of well-being across the lifespan. Future studies employing longitudinal, cohort, and experience-sampling methodologies can elucidate how psychological well-being evolves over time, how early life experiences influence adult functioning, and how individuals adapt to life transitions such as career changes, illness, aging, or social disruption. Developmental perspectives are especially important for understanding sensitive periods in which interventions may be most effective in promoting sustained well-being.

Advances in neuroscience and psychophysiology are also contributing to a deeper understanding of the biological underpinnings of psychological well-being. Emerging research explores neural correlates of positive functioning, including reward processing, emotion regulation, and social connectedness. Integrating neuroscientific findings with psychological theories can help bridge the gap between subjective well-being experiences and underlying brain and physiological mechanisms. However, future work must critically address the risk of reductionism by ensuring that biological explanations complement rather than replace psychosocial and contextual accounts of well-being.

Technological innovations constitute a rapidly expanding domain in PWB research and practice. Digital interventions, including mobile applications, online therapy platforms, and artificial intelligence–based well-being tools, offer scalable and accessible approaches to enhancing psychological well-being. Additionally, real-time well-being tracking through wearable devices and ecological momentary assessment provides nuanced data on daily fluctuations in mood, stress, and functioning. While these technologies hold significant promise, future research must critically evaluate their efficacy, ethical implications, data privacy concerns, and differential accessibility across socioeconomic groups.

Finally, there is growing recognition of collective well-being and planetary health as essential extensions of psychological well-being research. Contemporary challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and global crises underscore the interdependence between individual well-being, community resilience, and

ecological sustainability. Integrating PWB with frameworks of collective and planetary well-being encourages a shift from purely individual outcomes toward shared responsibility, social cohesion, and sustainable living. This broader perspective not only enriches theoretical models of well-being but also aligns psychological research with global priorities for long-term human and environmental flourishing.

## 10. **Conclusion:**

Psychological well-being has emerged as a foundational construct in contemporary psychology, reflecting a decisive shift from deficit-oriented models of mental health toward a more holistic understanding of human functioning. As demonstrated throughout this review, psychological well-being cannot be reduced to the mere absence of distress or psychopathology; rather, it encompasses a dynamic constellation of emotional, cognitive, relational, and existential dimensions that collectively shape how individuals experience and evaluate their lives. Theoretical and empirical developments in this field have significantly expanded conceptualizations of mental health by foregrounding meaning, purpose, personal growth, and positive functioning alongside subjective happiness.

A critical examination of conceptual foundations reveals that both hedonic and eudemonic traditions have made indispensable contributions to the understanding of well-being, yet each remains limited when considered in isolation. Hedonic approaches offer valuable insights into affective experiences and life satisfaction, while eudemonic models deepen understanding of optimal functioning, self-realization, and engagement with life's challenges. Increasing empirical evidence of overlap between these traditions underscores the necessity of integrative frameworks that acknowledge the coexistence of pleasure, meaning, and resilience in human well-being. Models such as Ryff's multidimensional framework and Self-Determination Theory have advanced the field by emphasizing psychological functioning and motivational processes, although ongoing debates regarding conceptual boundaries, cultural universality, and dimensional validity highlight the need for continued theoretical refinement.

Measurement remains a central methodological challenge in psychological well-being research. While existing instruments have facilitated substantial empirical progress, reliance on self-report measures, inconsistent factor structures, and limited cultural validation constrain the interpretability and generalizability of findings. Addressing these limitations requires methodological pluralism, including longitudinal designs, experience-sampling methods, and mixed-method approaches that capture the dynamic, contextual, and developmental nature of well-being. Equally important is the development of culturally grounded assessment tools that reflect diverse values, relational orientations, and lived experiences beyond Western, individualistic frameworks.

Empirical findings reviewed in this paper demonstrate that psychological well-being is shaped by a complex interplay of individual, social, and structural factors. Personality traits, cognitive appraisals, coping strategies, and emotion regulation processes contribute significantly to individual differences in well-being, yet these intrapersonal factors operate within broader social environments characterized by relationships, socioeconomic resources, and cultural norms. Evidence linking psychological well-being to physical health outcomes further reinforces its relevance as a critical public health construct, while also underscoring the need for interdisciplinary research to clarify causal pathways and underlying mechanisms.

Cultural and contextual analyses challenge universalist assumptions and emphasize that well-being is embedded within sociocultural systems, collective identities, and historical conditions. Non-Western and indigenous perspectives highlight relationality, spirituality, and community belonging as central to flourishing, calling for more inclusive and context-sensitive models of psychological well-being. These insights, alongside critical debates within the field, caution against overly individualistic and decontextualized approaches that overlook structural inequalities and lived realities.

In conclusion, psychological well-being is best understood as a multidimensional, culturally embedded, and contextually situated process rather than a fixed outcome. Advancing the field requires integrative theories, innovative methodologies, and multilevel interventions that address both individual capacities and structural conditions. By embracing conceptual plurality and contextual sensitivity, future research can contribute to a more equitable, meaningful, and scientifically robust understanding of psychological well-being, ultimately informing practices and policies that promote human flourishing across diverse populations and life contexts.

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