

The Science of Happiness: Understanding Emotional Dynamics and Well-Being

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Abstract: This research examines the connection between emotional expressiveness and subjective well-being in young adults aged 19 to 23 years in West Tripura. A total of 200 participants, comprising 100 boys and 100 girls, were selected through a simple random sampling technique. The Subjective Well-Being Inventory (Sell & Nagpal, 1992) and the Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire (King & Emmons, 1990) were utilized to evaluate subjective well-being and emotional expressiveness, respectively. The findings indicated notable gender differences, with boys demonstrating greater emotional expressiveness in comparison to girls. The correlation between emotional expressiveness and subjective well-being was found to be significant. Positive emotional expression and intimacy were identified as significant positive predictors, while negative emotional expression demonstrated a detrimental effect. Regression analysis indicated that emotional expressiveness explained 72.1% of the variance in subjective well-being. Intimacy and positive emotions had positive contributions, whereas negative emotions had a detrimental effect. The findings highlight the significance of promoting positive emotional expression and intimacy, while also addressing negative emotions, to improve subjective well-being. The research highlights the significance of emotional regulation in enhancing mental health and provides valuable insights for focused interventions.

Keywords: Emotional expressiveness, Subjective well-being, Intimacy, Emotional regulation, Young adults, Mental health

Introduction

Emotional expressiveness, defined as the capacity to communicate emotions openly through verbal and nonverbal means, plays a critical role in emotional functioning and interpersonal relationships (Gross & John, 2003). It encompasses the frequency, intensity, and clarity of emotional expression, influencing how individuals regulate emotions and connect with others (Kring et al., 1994). Effective emotional expressiveness not only facilitates personal understanding of emotions but also allows others to respond empathetically, thereby enhancing social bonds and mental health.

Subjective well-being, a vital indicator of psychological health, is conceptualized as a combination of life satisfaction (a cognitive evaluation of life) and affective components, including the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect (Diener et al., 1985). High subjective well-being reflects a positive outlook on life and the ability to cope with challenges, making it an essential construct in mental health research. Emotional factors, including the ability to express emotions, significantly contribute to the development and maintenance of subjective well-being.

Research suggests that individuals who can effectively express emotions experience better psychological outcomes, including lower levels of stress and enhanced satisfaction with life (Pennebaker, 1997). Bonanno et al. (2004) conducted a study on resilience, indicating that the capacity for flexible emotional expression, encompassing the appropriate expression of both positive and negative emotions, is essential for psychological well-being. The strict control of emotions, conversely, was linked to inadequate adjustment and heightened distress.

Emotional Expressiveness and Subjective Well-Being

Emotional expressiveness functions as a crucial mechanism for regulating emotions and sustaining psychological well-being. According to Gross (2002), effectively expressing emotions helps individuals manage their emotional states, ensuring psychological balance. For instance, expressing negative emotions like sadness or frustration can diminish their intensity through catharsis, a process that provides emotional release

and eases distress (Pennebaker, 1997). In a similar vein, expressing positive emotions such as gratitude or joy reinforces these states, enhancing feelings of happiness and fulfillment while fostering upward emotional spirals (Fredrickson, 2001). Conversely, emotional suppression, defined as the intentional avoidance of emotional expression, has been linked to increased stress levels and negative psychological effects (Gross & Levenson, 1993). Suppression can impede the natural processing of emotions, leading to internalized tension and prolonged emotional strain.

In addition to its function in emotional regulation, emotional expressiveness plays a crucial role in developing and sustaining interpersonal relationships. Demir et al. (2015) emphasize that the expression of positive emotions, including love, appreciation, and empathy, enhances emotional intimacy and trust, which are vital elements of robust and supportive relationships. The connections established serve as the foundation of social support systems, functioning as protective buffers against stress and making a significant contribution to subjective well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Emotional support gained from expressive interactions assists individuals in overcoming challenges, strengthening resilience and psychological stability. On the other hand, challenges in conveying emotions may lead to obstacles in relationships. Failure to express emotions clearly can result in misunderstandings, conflicts, and a sense of emotional isolation. The relational strains impede the development of supportive networks and intensify psychological distress, ultimately compromising overall well-being (Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991). Inadequate handling of emotions can undermine trust and intimacy, thereby exacerbating feelings of loneliness and disconnection.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to explore how emotional expressiveness influences subjective well-being among young adults, focusing on its role in emotional regulation and social bonding. By examining this relationship, particularly in diverse cultural contexts, the study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that promote psychological resilience and life satisfaction during this pivotal developmental stage.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine whether emotional expressiveness and subjective wellbeing varies across gender.
2. To examine the relationship between emotional expressiveness and subjective well-being among young adults.
3. To analyze the contribution of expression positive emotion, expression of negative emotions and expression of intimacy to subjective well-being.

Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant difference between boys and girls with regard to their emotional expressiveness.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between boys and girls with regard to their subjective well-being.

H₀3: There is no significant relationship between emotional expressiveness and subjective well-being among young adults.

H₀4: Emotional Expressiveness (Positive emotional expressiveness, Negative emotional expressiveness, Expression of Intimacy) does not significantly predict subjective well-being among young adults.

Sample

The study was conducted among young adults aged 19–23 years residing in Tripura. A total of 200 participants (Boys = 100, Girls = 100) were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Tools Used

1. **The Subjective Well-Being Inventory (Sell. H. and Nagpal. R., 1992)** is a 40-item self-report questionnaire developed to assess an individual's mental state about general feelings about life. The inventory has 11 dimensions: positive affect, expectation-achievement congruence, confidence in coping, transcendence, family group support, social support, primary group concern, inadequate mental mastery, perceived ill-health, lack of social contacts, and general wellbeing negative affect. The SUBI inventory has a test-retest reliability of 0.87 and a validity of 0.86
2. **Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire (EEQ)**, developed by King and Emmons (1990), uses a 7-point rating scale to assess an individual's emotional expressiveness across both positive and negative emotions. This scale ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), with intermediate points

allowing for nuanced responses to each item. The EEQ is divided into subscales that measure positive emotional expressiveness (e.g., the expression of joy, excitement), negative emotional expressiveness (e.g., expressing anger, frustration), and general emotional expressiveness (overall emotional openness). The questionnaire focuses on the frequency and intensity with which emotions are expressed in various contexts, with higher scores reflecting greater emotional expressiveness. This version maintains strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha typically between 0.80 and 0.90) and validity.

Procedure

Initially, rapport was established with the students, and an explanation was provided regarding the research topic and its objectives. The researcher clarified that participation is entirely optional, and individuals retain the choice to leave at any moment. Oral instructions were provided for each scale prior to distributing the questionnaires. It was also emphasized to read each question carefully and select the statements that they find most applicable to themselves. Out of 300 randomly selected young persons, 55 declined to provide consent, 38 failed to complete the questionnaire, and 7 did not satisfy the criteria established for this study. Consequently, the final sample comprised 200 young adults from various colleges in West Tripura. Data from the final sample was collected, and appropriate statistical procedures were employed to analyze the acquired data utilizing the newest version of SPSS.

Results and Discussion

H₀1: There is no significant difference between boys and girls with regard to their emotional expressiveness.

Table -1 shows the Mean, SD and t values of emotional expressiveness of the young adults of West Tripura.

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Emotional Expressiveness	Boys	26.02	3.71	26.025**
	Girls	13.83	2.84	

** Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 1 reveals a significant gender difference with regard to their emotional expressiveness. Boys have a higher mean in emotional expressiveness (Mean = 26.02, SD = 3.71) compared to girls (Mean = 13.83, SD = 2.84), with a t-value of 26.025, which is statistically significant at 0.01 level. This finding leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that boys are significantly more expressive emotionally than girls in this sample of young adults from West Tripura. These results may reflect cultural, social, or psychological factors influencing emotional expression and warrant further exploration to understand their implications for emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships. Gender differences in emotional expressiveness can be attributed to socialization processes, where boys may be encouraged to display emotional assertiveness, while girls are often socialized to regulate their emotions to maintain social harmony (Brody & Hall, 2008).

H₀2: There is no significant difference between boys and girls with regard to their subjective wellbeing.

Table -2 shows the Mean, SD and t values of subjective wellbeing of the young adults of West Tripura.

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Subjective Well-being	Boys	76.69	2.05	45.075**
	Girls	63.07	2.21	

** Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 2 indicates a significant gender difference with regard to their subjective wellbeing. Boys have a higher mean subjective well-being score (Mean = 76.69, SD = 2.05) compared to girls (Mean = 63.07, SD = 2.21), with a t-value of 45.075, which is statistically significant at 0.01 level. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, suggesting that boys experience significantly higher subjective well-being than girls in this sample of young adults from West Tripura. The difference may be influenced by factors such as social roles, coping

mechanisms, or cultural expectations, and further investigation is necessary to understand its implications for mental health interventions and support systems. Research conducted by **Nolen-Hoeksema and Aldao (2011)** establishes a connection between reduced SWB in adolescent girls and coping methods that are more focused on emotions and a greater vulnerability to negative affect.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between emotional expressiveness and subjective well-being among young adults.

Table -3 shows the coefficient of correlation between Emotional Expressiveness (expression of positive emotions, expression of Intimacy and expression of negative emotions) and Subjective Wellbeing of the young adults of Tripura.

Variable	Co-efficient of Correlation with subjective Wellbeing
Expression of Positive Emotions	.238**
Expression of Intimacy	.729**
Expression of Negative Emotions	-.376**
Emotional Expressiveness	.842**

** Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 3 shows the coefficients of correlation between various dimensions of emotional expressiveness and subjective well-being. Emotional expressiveness as a whole exhibits a strong positive correlation with subjective well-being ($r=.842$), indicating a significant relationship at 0.01 level. Among its dimensions, expression of positive emotions ($r=.238$) and expression of intimacy ($r=.729$) show positive correlations. This finding is consistent with **Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory (2001)**, which emphasizes the significant impact of positive emotions in enhancing an individual's cognitive and social resources. The theory posits that positive emotions like joy, gratitude, and love extend beyond offering temporary happiness; they also "broaden" thought-action repertoires, motivating individuals to explore, connect, and cultivate enduring personal and social resources. Similarly, Intimacy is essential for establishing trust and strengthening interpersonal relationships, which serve as the foundation for effective social support systems (**Demir et al., 2015**). The expression of intimate emotions, including love, affection, and care, fosters the development of deeper emotional connections with others. These bonds promote mutual understanding and reliability, which are crucial for building trust in relationships. Conversely, expression of negative emotions ($r=-.376$) is negatively correlated with subjective well-being. These results lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis, suggesting that higher levels of positive and intimate emotional expression are associated with greater subjective well-being, whereas negative emotional expression detracts from it. Excessive negative emotional expression is associated with increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, all of which adversely affect subjective well-being. **Gross and Levenson (1993)** discovered that emotional suppression or the inability to manage negative emotions resulted in elevated physiological arousal, increased stress levels, and adverse mood states. Conversely, the unregulated expression of negative emotions can intensify feelings of distress and contribute to mental health challenges, ultimately undermining overall well-being.

H₀₄: Personality traits and its dimensions (Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion and Neuroticism) and resilience do not contribute in determining subjective wellbeing among young adults of Tripura.

Table-4 Regression analysis indicating the role of emotional expressiveness (expression of positive emotions, expression of intimacy and expression of negative emotions) in predicting Subjective Well-Being.

Predictor Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	β	F Change
Expression of Positive Emotions	.849	.721	.717	.277**	169.088**
Expression of Intimacy				.861**	
Expression of Negative Emotions				-.425**	

**** Significant at 0.01 level.**

Table 4 presents the results, which indicate that emotional expressiveness dimensions significantly predict subjective well-being. The overall model is strong ($R=.849$, $R^2=.721$, Adjusted $R^2=.717$), explaining **72.1%** of the variance in subjective well-being. Among the predictors, expression of intimacy ($\beta=.861$, $p<.01$) and expression of positive emotions ($\beta=.277$, $p<.01$) are significant positive predictors, while expression of negative emotions ($\beta=-.425$, $p<.01$) is a significant negative predictor. The model's F-change ($F=169.088$, $p<.01$) is highly significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings suggest that fostering positive emotional expression and intimacy, while managing negative emotional expression, can substantially enhance subjective well-being among young adults in Tripura. **Gable et al. (2004)** established that the exchange of positive experiences and the cultivation of intimacy in relationships are significantly correlated with increased well-being and life satisfaction. Their findings indicate that intimate expressions foster emotional connections and enhance overall wellbeing. Another study done by **Gross and John (2003)** examined the correlation between emotion regulation and well-being, demonstrating that persons who often express unpleasant emotions unregulated report diminished life satisfaction and elevated stress levels.

Conclusion

The study indicated significant differences in emotional expressiveness and subjective well-being among young adults in West Tripura, with boys exhibiting greater emotional expressiveness and well-being compared to girls. The expression of positive emotions and intimacy is positively correlated with subjective well-being, whereas the expression of negative emotions has an adverse impact on it. The findings indicate that encouraging positive emotional expression and intimacy, alongside the management of negative emotions, can improve overall well-being, emphasizing the significance of emotional regulation in supporting mental health.

Conflict of Interests

The authors affirm that there are no competing interests to disclose.

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