

## Psychological Well-Being and Life Satisfaction among Rural Island Community in Langkawi, Malaysia

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Received: 10- June -2023  
Revised: 12- July -2023  
Accepted: 05- August -2023

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### Abstract

Malaysia has demonstrated that the nation is committed to achieving better targets through sustained and systematic efforts for sustainable development goals (SDGs). Targeted at addressing Goal 3 in promoting health and well-being, this study proposed a geopark SDGs study addressing the psychological well-being of the rural community in Tuba Island, Langkawi. The fundamental of psychological well-being is mental health which would reflect the overview of individual health as a whole. Since there is limited evidence on community well-being, thus this study proposed an evaluation platform for community psychological well-being dimensions and how each dimension determines certain job-related outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction. This study shall employ a quantitative approach through a self-administered survey questionnaire to achieve its objectives. The target respondents are Tuba Island, Langkawi villagers using the purposive sampling method. This study shall be a significant input to policymakers, related ministries and government agencies such as the Ministry of the Rural Development and Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) to increase awareness of psychological well-being among rural communities and formulate and implement development policies for them. This would lead to better community health, enhancing their economic status and well-being as a whole. The most imperative significance of the study is of course to materialize the vision United Nations of world capacity building through various SDGs initiatives.

**Keywords:** Community Psychological Well-Being, Life Satisfaction, Rural Island Community, Langkawi, Malaysia.

### 1. Introduction

A shared roadmap for peace and prosperity for people of all ages, both now and in the future, is provided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was accepted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>). Goal 3 of the SDG is health and well-being which promotes the health live and well-being of its community at every stage of life. Malaysia has indeed given its commitment to achieving better targets through sustained systematic efforts for SDGs. The elements of Goal 3 SDG which is good health and well-being, for example, have been embedded in the recently announced Rural Development Policy (DPLB), under the Ministry of Rural Development, in achieving the vision of '*Luar Bandar Sejahtera*' (Prosperous Rural) regardless of race, religion, social status, gender and community (<https://www.thesundaily.my/local/dplb-will-make-rural-areas-conducive-close-the-disparity-gapYY1032199>). Several strategies and programmes from all aspects have been initiated to develop the rural community in various aspects economically, entrepreneurship, human capital and environment has indeed reflected the importance of health and well-being aspects among the rural community.

Well-being has initially involved the desirable state of one's positive experience (Hall, Johnson, Watt, Tsipa, & O'Connor, 2016) such as energy and feeling healthy. It can be achieved by ensuring the balance of a few aspects

of the human being, including the physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social. In the employment context, well-being is more than the success of an employee to contribute the desired outcomes to the organization. Psychological well-being, in particular, is about lives running smoothly and consists of both feeling good and doing one's job successfully (Huppert, 2009). In the context of the community, it represents the overall health priorities and calls for more research and development as highlighted in 3 SDGs targets <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>. In an overall assessment of the community's psychological well-being is imperative as its decrease shall contribute to various mental health problems.

Tuba Island, in particular, is a geopark-remoted island located 5km southwest of Kuah Jetty, Langkawi. Communities of Tuba Island consist of villagers that live a relatively traditional lifestyle on the island. Geopark SDG initiative has indeed called for an up-down approach for the sustainable development of the area, which includes the well-being of its community <https://www.bharian.com.my/kolumnis/2017/10/336298/gerakan-secara-integrasi-jayakanagenda-geopark>. The previous study on SDGs in Tuba Island has been conducted on the sustainable coastal environment (e.g., Mazlin et al., 2017), however, very limited study or none has been found on the well-being of the rural community of Tuba Island. Although study on psychological well-being has been receiving remarkable attention globally, very few studies exist in Malaysia, especially in the context of SDGs, particularly in the Geopark area such as the community of Tuba Island.

Thus, little is known about the level of each component of psychological well-being. It is also interesting to explore the outcome of psychological well-being from the job-related perspective as it would enhance their level of life as a whole. Therefore, this study is: (1) proposing a community psychological well-being (CPWB) index that would able to identify the level of each psychological well-being dimension; (2) to determine any significant effect of each psychological well-being dimension on job-related variables such as job performance and job satisfaction.

The objectives of the research are:

1. To develop a community psychological well-being (CPWB) index that would able to identify the level of each psychological well-being dimension;
2. To determine any significant effect of each psychological well-being dimension on job-related variables such as job performance and job satisfaction.

## **2. Literature Review**

Well-being is a commonly used concept. There are several definitions of what it is that come from various angles. Additionally, words like "happiness," "quality of life," "well-being," and "life satisfaction" are frequently used in conjunction with one another. For instance, the psychological viewpoint defines well-being as the predominance of good traits, whereas the clinical perspective defines well-being as the absence of harmful conditions. In a general context, well-being can be divided into three main categories namely, subjective well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being. Subjective well-being is referred to as the evaluation and experiences their life with positive rather than negative affect (Diener, 1984). There are three dimensions of subjective well-being namely life satisfaction, positive affect (work engagement, job satisfaction and happiness) and negative affect (workaholism and burnout). Social well-being, on the other hand, is the assessment of the condition and function of a person in a society that make employees in a positive state of relationships, social stability and social peace (Keyes, 1998). Psychological well-being is elaboration d in the next section.

### **Psychological well-being**

The significance of psychological well-being in the context of the community has been discussed by scholars these years. Generally, it is well understood that positive psychological well-being has a significant role in all types of environments. In order to be psychologically healthy, one must both feel well and be able to perform well (Huppert, 2009). When troubling emotions overpower people's ability to go about their regular lives, it is weakened (Huppert, 2009). People are often considered to be mentally sound if they do not have mental health issues like depression or other types of psychological issues. However, this notion does not fully portray

wellness as well. As a result, mental health needs to be defined with the presence of positive elements (Ryff, 2010).

The framework Ryff established in 1989 to study people's eudemonic well-being is called psychological well-being. One significant way that psychological well-being varies from previous models is that it is multifaceted and goes beyond happiness or good feelings. Instead of being narrowly focused, a good life is balanced and comprehensive, involving all of the diverse facets of well-being. According to Ryff and Keyes (1995), happiness isn't the only goal worth working for; it's about realising one's full potential via success. According to Ryff (1989), psychological well-being can be measured using six dimensions namely:

1. Self-acceptance - self-acceptance is characterized by self-actualization, mental health, optimal functioning as well as maturity
2. Positive relations with others - warm, trusting interpersonal relations are important components in these dimensions.
3. Autonomy - autonomy can be characterized as qualities such as self-determination, independence and the regulation of behaviour from between
4. Environmental mastery - it is referring to choosing or creating environments suitable to his or her conditions. It is also defined as the characteristics of mental health
5. Purpose in life - a clear comprehension of life's purpose, a sense of directedness and intentionality.
6. Personal growth - to continue to develop one's potential, to grow and expand as a person

Some previous studies have been conducted on community psychological well-being such as Wang et al., (2000) which studied post-earthquake well-being among the rural community in China. Recently Zainuddin et al. (2019) conducted a study on community well-being among communities in the nickel mining and processing industry. It can be concluded that there should be more research to be conducted on the area of community well-being as it is significant in addressing the SDGs issues and well-being. Study on outcomes of psychological well-being has been very limited. Among the outcomes of psychological well-being are job performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000) job satisfaction Harrison et al. (Robertson, Birch, Cooper, 2012).

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study utilizes a quantitative design as it attempts to determine the level of psychological well-being dimensions, particularly self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. This can be done by developing the CPWB Matrix that would enable the overall assessment of the psychological well-being dimensions. Secondly, the quantitative method can also address the second objective of the study in determining the relationships between variables. Data was collected using a personally administered questionnaire survey using the purposive sampling method. The research team had to interview the villagers based on the survey questionnaires. The respondents of the study are rural villagers that reside in Tuba Island, Langkawi. The overall population of residents of Tuba Island is almost 3000 people, thus targeted number of respondents is 200 villagers as it is deemed sufficient for analysis. The measurements adopted in this study were from Ryff (2010) with 5 Likert-scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics in developing the CPWB Matrix while correlational and multiple regression analyses were used to determine the relationships between psychological well-being and job-related variables such as job performance and job satisfaction.

### **4. Findings**

The demographic and normality results of the participating respondents in this study were shown in Table 1. From the total respondents of 95 people, it was found that the majority of them were female (60%), mainly having secondary school education (54%), earning less than RM2,000 per month (76%), and mostly original inhabitants of Tuba Island (84%). In terms of age category, it was almost equally distributed, i.e., 30 people aged 25 to 44 years old, 29 people above 55 years old, 18 of them aged between 45 to 54 years old, and also 18

of them aged less than 25 years old. The results of skewness show all demographic variables were normal as all values were below 1.96. Similarly, the values of kurtosis were all less than 3 except for monthly gross income.

**Table 1.** Respondents' demographic profiles

| Variables   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| Gender (Skewness: -0.42, Kurtosis: -1.87)             |           |                |
| Male  | 38        | 40             |
| Female  | 57        | 60             |
| Age (Skewness: -0.09, Kurtosis: -1.26)                |           |                |
| 15 – 24   | 18        | 18.9           |
| 25 – 34   | 15        | 15.8           |
| 35 – 44   | 15        | 15.8           |
| 45 – 54   | 18        | 18.9           |
| 55 – 64   | 23        | 24.2           |
| 65 and above  | 6         | 6.3            |
| Highest Education (Skewness: 0.81, Kurtosis: -1.01)   |           |                |
| Primary school  | 23        | 24.5           |
| Secondary school                                      | 53        | 54.2           |
| Diploma or Certificate                                | 15        | 15.9           |
| Bachelor degree                                       | 3         | 3.2            |
| Employment (Skewness: 1.52, Kurtosis: 0.33)           |           |                |
| Working   | 76        | 80             |
| Unemployed  | 19        | 20             |
| Monthly Gross Income (Skewness: 2.45, Kurtosis: 5.93) |           |                |
| RM2000 or less  | 58        | 76.3           |
| RM2001 – RM4000                                       | 13        | 17.1           |
| RM4001 or more  | 5         | 6.6            |
| Original Inhabitants (Skewness: 1.91, Kurtosis: 1.67) |           |                |
| Yes   | 80        | 84.2           |
| No  | 15        | 15.8           |

Based on Table 2, all variables in this study, i.e., 6 sub-dimensions of the independent variable of psychological well-being and 1 dependent variable of life satisfaction were found to be reliable as all the Cronbach's Alphas were more than 0.7. All variables also fulfilled the normality condition as all skewness and kurtosis results were less than 1.2 and 3.2 respectively. In terms of mean, out of a maximum rating of 5, the highest mean belongs to the sub-dimension variable of personal growth (i.e., 4.31 or 86%), hence indicating that on average the respondents in this studied rural island were highly positive in terms of their growth in life. The second-highest mean was purpose in life (i.e., 4.27 or 85%), indicating on average the islanders were highly satisfied with their purpose in life. The third highest mean was environmental mastery (i.e., 4.16 or 83%), thus indicating quite a good level. The fourth highest mean belongs to self-acceptance (i.e., 4.09 or 82%). The third and second-lowest means were autonomy and positive relations with others (i.e., 4.04 or 81%, and 4.00 or 80% respectively), hence

showing on average the rural islanders in this study were quite good in terms of their perception of their ability to make own decisions as well as enjoying good relationships with others. Finally, the lowest mean belongs to the dependent variable of life satisfaction (i.e., 3.87 or 77%). This result clearly showed that on average the respondents were only at a fair level of overall satisfaction with their life.

**Table 2:** Descriptive and reliability analysis

| Variables                        | Reliability<br>(Cronbach's<br>Alpha) | Mean | Standard<br>Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| Psychological Well-being         |                                      |      |                       |          |          |
| • Self-Acceptance                | 0.83                                 | 4.09 | 0.67                  | -0.88    | 1.29     |
| • Positive Relations with Others | 0.80                                 | 4.00 | 0.75                  | -1.16    | 1.71     |
| • Autonomy                       | 0.80                                 | 4.04 | 0.60                  | -1.07    | 3.19     |
| • Environmental Mastery          | 0.78                                 | 4.16 | 0.55                  | -0.71    | 0.51     |
| • Purpose In Life                | 0.77                                 | 4.27 | 0.50                  | -0.29    | -0.64    |
| • Personal Growth                | 0.81                                 | 4.31 | 0.48                  | -0.25    | -0.41    |
| Life Satisfaction                | 0.77                                 | 3.87 | 0.65                  | -0.43    | 0.55     |

**Table 3.** Regression analysis

| Independent variables:         | Dependent variable: Life Satisfaction |                          |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                                | Unstandardised Coefficient            | Standardised Coefficient |
| (constant)                     | 0.15                                  |                          |
| Self-Acceptance                | 0.28*                                 | 0.28*                    |
| Positive Relations with Others | 0.07                                  | 0.08                     |
| Autonomy                       | 0.11                                  | 0.10                     |
| Environmental Mastery          | 0.42**                                | 0.36*                    |
| Purpose In Life                | 0.05                                  | 0.04                     |
| Personal Growth                | -0.02                                 | -0.02                    |
| F value R <sup>2</sup>         | 16.38**                               |                          |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>        | 0.53                                  |                          |
|                                | 0.50                                  |                          |

Note. \*p < .05.\*\*p < .01.

The results of the regression analysis as shown in Table 3 manifestly prove the significant effects of two sub-dimensions of psychological well-being of environmental mastery and self-acceptance, towards life satisfaction among villagers of a rural island in Langkawi, Malaysia. The result of R<sup>2</sup> specified that 53% of variations in the dependent variable of life satisfaction are due to all six sub-dimensions of the independent variable of psychological well-being, i.e., self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Hence the remaining 47% of variations in life satisfaction are due to other factors not covered in this study. The strongest significant factor is environmental mastery, followed by self-acceptance, whereas the other four factors of positive relations with others, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth were not found to be not significant. Hence, this study obviously verifies that environmental mastery is the most important predictor in ensuring satisfaction in the life of rural islanders. Therefore, the rural

islanders really feel that they are satisfied with their lives if they could master their environment well. Similarly, self-acceptance should also be taken care of to ensure boosting their satisfaction in life.

**Table 4.** Independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA

| Demographic variables |              | Autonomy                   | Environmental Mastery |        |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Original Inhabitants  | Yes          | 4.00                       | 4.11                  |        |
|                       | No           | 4.26                       | 4.42                  |        |
|                       | t-value      |                            | -1.51                 |        |
| Age                   | 15 – 24      | 3.80                       | 4.07                  |        |
|                       | 25 – 34      | 3.72                       | 3.88                  |        |
|                       | 35 – 44      | 3.75                       | 3.89                  |        |
|                       | 45 – 54      | 4.23                       | 4.34                  |        |
|                       | 55 – 64      | 4.39                       | 4.44                  |        |
|                       | 65 and above | F-value                    | 4.40                  | 5.49** |
|                       |              | Group comparison (Scheffe) | 55 – 64 > 15 – 24     |        |
|                       |              | 55 – 64 > 25 – 34          | -                     |        |
|                       |              | 55 – 64 > 35 – 44          | 3.63**                |        |

*Note.* Demographic variables were represented by mean scores which higher scores represent greater agreement with the attributes. Dashes represent data that were not applicable. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Additionally, an independent sample t-test analysis was conducted to identify any significant differences in terms of autonomy and environmental mastery between original and non-original inhabitants of Pulau Tuba as well as among various categories of age using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) as shown in Table 4. The results established that environmental mastery was significantly different between original and non-original inhabitants, which non-original inhabitants found to be higher than the original ones. Whilst, both original and non-original inhabitants were the same in terms of their autonomy. Astonishingly, there were significant differences among various ages of respondents in the surveyed rural island, where based on Scheffe’s post hoc test of ANOVA found that those people who are aged between 55 to 64 years old were significantly higher autonomy as compared to those aged between 15 to 24, 25 to 34, and 35 to 44 years old. These discoveries evidently elucidated the advantage of non-original inhabitants for mastering environmental skills and the benefit of autonomy especially for the senior people.

## 5. Discussion

One of the most meaningful contributions of the study is to bridge the gap between the existing literature on the rural community through the perspective of psychological well-being. Even though psychological well-being, in particular, has received a lot of attention in the West, the literature on the rural community is still very limited. The newly developed index of psychological well-being will provide insights into building the capacity of the rural community and contributing to the existing literature on issues such as attitude, motivation and engagement.

The proposed index has a potential application to any type of rural community and society as the number of the increasing concern in developing an inclusive nation. It will provide a guideline for enhancing rural communities from the perspective of psychological well-being. Specifically, the proposed model will be useful to government departments, policymakers and social practitioners to create awareness of community well-being, specifically on psychological well-being. Additionally, the proposed model would provide new insights into

formulating community policies and designing social practices in managing and obtaining the full potential of the rural community. Since the study involves the well-being of the community, this study has a lot to offer.

Firstly, the study shall contribute to psychometric profiling through the CPWB matrix among rural communities in Tuba Island. This is important in providing an initial view of the mental health level in the rural community. Secondly, the study is imperative as it would create awareness of the importance and benefits gained from having improved well-being among the rural community. This is because well-being represented the overall health of an individual which enables them to successfully overcome difficulties and achieve what they want out of life. From the findings, relevant programs can be initiated to further improved their psychological well-being while at the same time exploring their strength, overcoming their daily issues as well as enabling them to prepare the community for what is coming in the future. This would further lead to better capacity building in achieving the nation's SDGs

Geopark areas are the germs of the nation. They are usually less explored and have a lot of potential. This study shall also explore the entrepreneurial potentials (e.g., cottage industries, fishing-related entrepreneurial activities) through the link between psychological well-being and job-related variables. This can lead to better productivity, motivation and performance which would lead to better economic growth of the rural community and subsequently of the nation. The low well-being level among employees could hurt productivity, which in turn has a great negative impact on economic performance as a whole.

It is believed that as a whole, the proposed study would benefit the nation in terms of moving towards a better nation in line with Vision 2020. The findings of the study would guide the organization, society and at the nation's level, it would contribute to producing quality, motivated and dedicated rural communities which is crucial to the nation in progressing towards a high-capacity building and sustainable nation in future.

#### **Acknowledgement**

This research was funded by UniversitiTeknologi MARA, Malaysia, file no 600-RMC/LESTARI SDG-T 5/3 (148/2019).

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