

# Life Satisfaction and the level of Happiness

**Mrs. S. Anithalakshmi**

Head/Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Madurai Institute of Social Sciences, Tamil Nadu, India.

**Abstract:** This study focuses on the concept, definition, and importance of life satisfaction. Achieving goals and creating the kind of life you admire are the foundations for a long-lasting feeling of contentment. This qualitative paper focuses on life satisfaction and its factors, determinants of life satisfaction, and Standard indicators of quality of life. To provide ways to improve happiness in the past, future, and present. Two primary emotions can influence how people view their lives. Both hope and optimism are made up of cognitive processes that are frequently focused on achieving and perceiving goals. Finally provide ways to increase life satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Life satisfaction, Happiness, Hope, Faith, Gratitude, Self-esteem, Forgiveness, Subjective well-being, Optimism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

A person's level of well-being is measured by their level of life satisfaction, which is evaluated in terms of their mood, relationship satisfaction, goals achieved, self-concepts, and self-perceived ability to cope with life. Life satisfaction is more about having a positive attitude toward one's life than it is about evaluating how one is feeling right now. A person's financial condition, educational level, life events, place of residence, and other factors have all been taken into account when calculating life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction is a reflection of the harmony between a person's wishes and their current situation. In other words, the bigger the disconnect between an individual's level of desires and their current situation, the lower their level of satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Diener & Diener, 2009). One of the topics examined in psychological theories over the past fifty years has been resilience, or the capacity to recover and return to the initial state when faced with unwholesome circumstances in life (Prince-Embury, Saklofske, & Vesely, 2014). Life satisfaction is a key element of subjective well-being. Numerous factors can have an impact on one's subjective well-being and level of life satisfaction. Sociodemographic factors include things like gender, age, marital status, earnings, and education. Examples of psychosocial components include health and illness, functional ability, level of activity, and social ties.

### 1.1 The objective of the study

1. To study the concept, and importance of life satisfaction and its factors.
2. To provide suggestions to improve happiness.
3. To provide suggestions to improve life satisfaction.

## 2. Concept of life satisfaction :

Philosophical and psychological theories of happiness and well-being use the concept of life satisfaction. "Life satisfaction" is frequently used as a synonym for "happiness," and it is frequently either connected to or regarded as a crucial element of well-being. However, there are two different definitions of "satisfaction" that are used in these diverse stories. In some cases, "satisfaction" refers to the perception of norms or expectations being met, while in other cases, "satisfaction" refers to a sensation of being happy with something. There are essentially two different ideas of life satisfaction used in life satisfaction reports as a result of these various meanings of the word "satisfaction.". "Cognitive" accounts of life satisfaction are those that use "satisfaction" in the first sense (the standard-fulfillment sense).

The idea of life satisfaction is more complicated than it first appears to be; despite the fact that the words are occasionally used interchangeably, the two concepts are in fact different. Life satisfaction refers to the evaluation of one's life as a whole, not simply their current level of enjoyment. Existing definitions of life satisfaction vary, however, Ed Diener, a researcher on well-being and life satisfaction, offers the following:

### 2.1 Definition of life satisfaction

"A comprehensive assessment of attitudes and feelings about one's life at a particular time, ranging from gloomy to optimistic." 2007 (Buetell). Another well-known expert on life satisfaction, Ruut Veenhoven, offers the following

explanation of the term: Last but not least, life satisfaction is defined as A cognitive evaluation of an underlying condition that is believed to be socially influenced and reasonably stable. (1989). Despite small differences in the definitions, life satisfaction refers to a person's overall feelings about their life. To put it another way, measuring life happiness is a general judgment rather than one that is based on a specific period of time or subject.

## 2.2 Importance of life satisfaction

One of the key ideas in positive psychology is subjective well-being. It is the individual's perception and experience of favorable and unfavorable emotional reactions as well as general and (domain) specific cognitive assessments of life satisfaction. "A person's cognitive and emotive judgments of his or her life" is the definition of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2002). A person's thoughts and sentiments in dangerous situations are influenced by a number of essential aspects, including life satisfaction, meaning in life, and hope. Additionally, if the threat persists for a long time and the quality of life for people begins to decline, these variables have an impact on how the present situation and the future are assessed.

People who have a high level of life happiness and a higher sense of purpose in life may find it easier to deal with risky abnormalities (Abrams et al., 2005; Batthyany and Russo-Netzer, 2014). Studies have been done on the relationship between life satisfaction and life quality (Manning-Walsh, 2005), hope and personality traits (Halama, 2010), happiness, depression, hope, and meaning in life (Nasiri and Bahram, 2008), humor and sense of gratitude (Proyer et al., 2013), perfectionism and humor (Alşandemir and Tagay, 2015), social support, self-esteem, and gender roles (Matud et al (Li et al., 2020).

## 2.3 Life satisfaction and its factors

Aging, childlessness, cognitive ability, daily life decisions, depression, discordant living arrangements, education level, economic status, health status, housing satisfaction, insurance, marital status, perceived discrimination, preferred living arrangement quality, quality and duration of sleep, religiosity, social functioning, and social support are all associated with older adults' life satisfaction. According to this study's systematic review, social support is the main contributor to life satisfaction. By bringing this issue to light, we may inform the public about the value of aging persons receiving social support to improve their quality of life.

Factors, daily living activities, aging, childlessness, cognitive ability, and everyday life decisions are all linked to older individuals' contentment with their lives. One of the key ideas in positive psychology is subjective well-being. It is the individual's perception and experience of favorable and unfavorable emotional reactions as well as general and (domain) specific cognitive assessments of life satisfaction. "A person's cognitive and emotive judgments of his or her life" is the definition of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2002). A person's thoughts and sentiments in dangerous situations are influenced by a number of essential aspects, including life satisfaction, meaning in life, and hope.

People who have a high level of life happiness and a higher sense of purpose in life may find it easier to deal with risky abnormalities (Abrams et al., 2005; Batthyany and Russo-Netzer, 2014). Studies have been done on the relationship between life satisfaction and life quality (Manning-Walsh, 2005), hope and personality traits (Halama, 2010), happiness, depression, hope, and meaning in life (Nasiri and Bahram, 2008), humor and sense of gratitude (Proyer et al., 2013), perfectionism and humor (Alşandemir and Tagay, 2015), social support, self-esteem, and gender roles (Matud et al (Li et al., 2020).

Hope is seen as a key factor in the growth of good things. Hope is described as a person's faith in their ability to accomplish their goals, as well as their contemplation of and movement toward those goals (Snyder, 2002). Hope has been linked in the literature to life satisfaction, personal growth, and psychological well-being (Valle et al., 2004). (Gilman and Huebner, 2006). Additionally, it was linked to resilience, purpose in life, and optimism (Feldman and Snyder, 2005), as well as life satisfaction and resilience (Ciarrochi et al., 2007). (Wu, 2011; Duggal et al., 2016).

People engage in cognitive and behavioral activities to try to comprehend who they are and how the world works (Higgins, 2000). People perceive the existence of meaning when they intellectually comprehend who they are, why they are in the world, and what they want out of life. People are able to discover purpose in life in this way. The power and intensity of an individual's efforts to comprehend and/or enhance the significance and purpose of their existence are referred to as their level of meaning in life (Steger et al., 2008).

As demonstrated by Leung's (2019) tragic optimism of restoring hope through accepting and overcoming traumas and Bowers' (2019) mature happiness through transcending the dark side of life, psychology can gain depth by applying the paradoxical principle of treating suffering as the foundation for sustainable well-being. In this sense, people naturally seek purpose in their lives, and this search for meaning can open up new chances and provide new obstacles. On the other hand, some authors consider the search for meaning to be a sign of dysfunction.

For instance, Baumeister (1991) and Klinger (1998) point out that only those who experience disappointment while attempting to meet their needs engage in a search for meaning. Frankl (1992), focusing on the purpose of life,

claims that meaning helps people recover from unpleasant experiences by reducing their negative effects. Finding meaning in life is regarded as a desirable quality and is a sign of well-being (Ryff, 1989). Jones (1995) emphasizes that one of the most significant signs of mental health is the pursuit of meaning. According to Frankl (1992), although life's meaning can fluctuate, it never goes away.

### 3. Discussions :

There are various approaches to discovering purpose in life. These can include working on a project, communicating with others, pursuing goodness, righteousness, and beauty, enjoying the outdoors, and loving someone. When the various definitions of "meaning in life" are taken into account, it becomes clear that this idea is connected to a variety of ideas, particularly positive psychology, rather than having a single, overarching definition.

The expression of meaning in life is another sign of well-being (Kashdan and Steger, 2007). According to the literature, resilience and overall well-being are linked to life satisfaction (Pan et al., 2008), life meaning, and well-being (Lightsey, 2006). both good and bad well-being (Scannell et al., 2002). A person who struggles with mental health issues may benefit greatly from having a sense of purpose in life. In existential positive psychology (PP 2.0; Wong, 2011–2019), which is defined by a balanced vision of the good life, encompassing the dynamic interaction between positives and negatives, meaning-centered, and cultural considerations, meaningful living has emerged as a key theme.

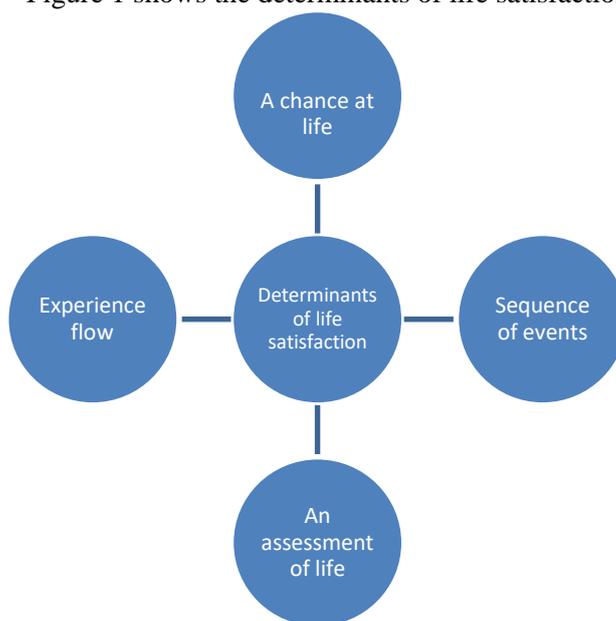
Life is made richer and more vibrant by well-being, which also gives it a sense of joy and purpose. However, the psychology of well-being must investigate both the drawbacks of happiness and the advantages of suffering (Wong, 2007). (Frankl, 1992; Wong, 2009). Negative feelings and pain need to be accounted for in a comprehensive theory of well-being (in cited Wong, 2011).

### 4. Analysis and Summary :

A person's life satisfaction and well-being during trying times are positively impacted by meaning in life and hope. Fear, like these other factors, helps a person defend themselves by keeping them aware during stressful situations. Despite the individual's acute fear, positive elements like hope and a sense of purpose in life might help the person become more protective of themselves. Although the primary determinants of life satisfaction are not fully understood and are given different weights by different people, research has indicated that they most likely fall into one of four sequential categories:

- a chance at life
- sequence of events
- Experience flow
- an assessment of life (Veenhoven, 1996).

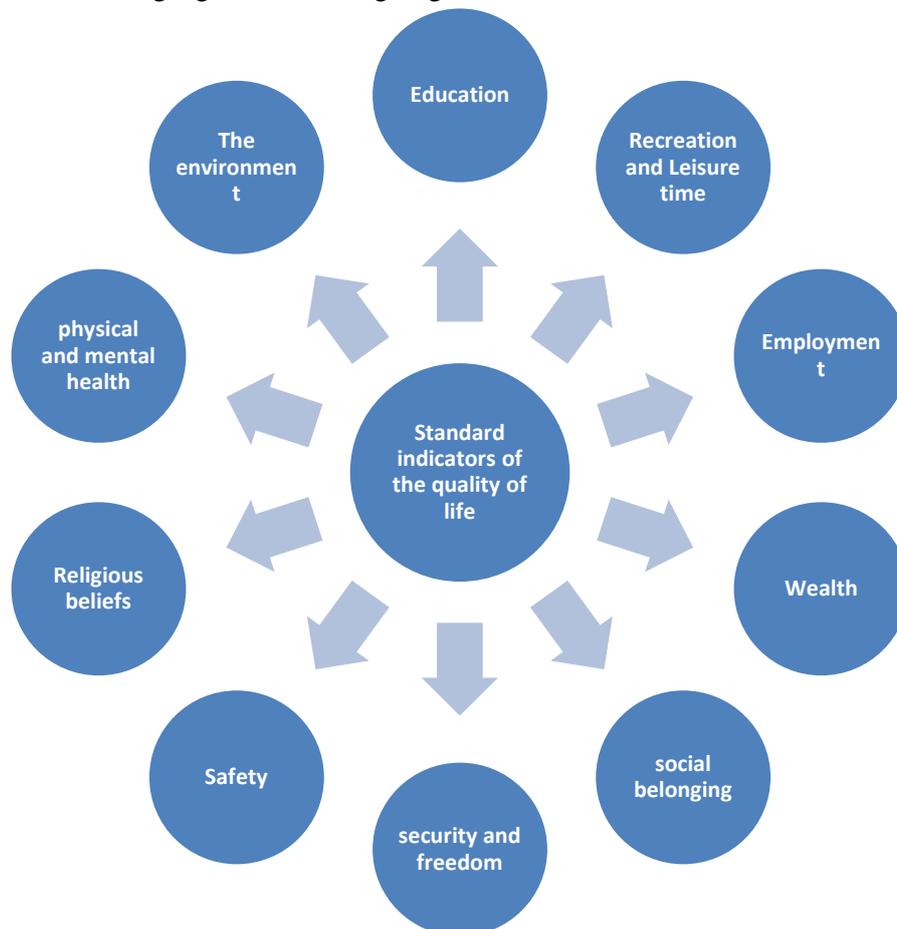
Figure 1 shows the determinants of life satisfaction.



**Figure-1**

The life chances category includes societal assets like economic well-being, social equality, political freedom, culture, and morality; individual assets like social position, material wealth, political clout, social prestige, and family

ties; and individual skills like social aptitude, mental toughness, physical fitness, and intellectual skill. A person's perception of how their life has been and how they feel about where it is heading in the future is referred to as their level of life satisfaction. It serves as a gauge of well-being. Figure 2 illustrates the standard indicators of the quality of life.



**Figure-2**

Life satisfaction has been assessed in connection to a variety of factors, including socioeconomic status, level of education, experiences, place of living, and many others. Professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania Martin Seligman has developed a formula for happiness that takes all of these elements into account. H is calculated as  $H = S + C + V$ . In this equation, H is a person's level of pleasure over the long term, S denotes the specified range (or biological boundaries), C denotes the conditions of a person's life, and V denotes the variables listed below.

$$H = S + C + V$$

- The letter H represents your overall pleasure.
- S is your set range or set point.
- C is the circumstances in your life.
- V stands for variables that you can choose to regulate.

H : Enduring level of Happiness

The point here is not to increase the number of fleeting moments of enjoyment in your life. Instead, the objective is to increase your degree of sustained happiness (which you will not accomplish by merely increasing the number of bursts of momentary positive feelings).

The final three factors in the happiness equation will reveal what influences our long-term levels of happiness.

### **S: Set Range**

A procedure known as adaption (or hedonic adaptation). It turns out that humans are masters at adaptation. After overcoming difficult challenges and appreciating the good things in life, we eventually return to our baseline level of happiness. Did you get a lottery win? For a few months, you'll feel better, but after that, you'll return to your predetermined state. Have you experienced a job termination? For a few weeks or months, your level of happiness will decline, but it will eventually return to normal.

### **Genuine Contentment**

Even those who have spinal cord injuries and become paraplegic quickly start to adjust to their severely constrained abilities, and within eight weeks they report more net happy mood than negative emotion. They eventually become only somewhat less content than people who are not paralyzed after a few years. The main fact is that we all naturally gravitate toward a certain range of happiness. What prevents your degree of happiness from rising is this predetermined range.

### **C: Circumstances**

According to Martin Seligman, the following techniques are effective for increasing your degree of long-term pleasure by altering your life's circumstances:

- Live in a prosperous democracy rather than a despotic one (a strong effect)
- Become wed (a robust effect, but perhaps not causal)
- Avoid bad experiences and emotions (only a moderate effect)
- Obtain a robust social network (a robust effect, but perhaps not causal)
- Get spiritual (which has a moderate effect, though)
- The following are some extrinsic factors that you should not worry too much about:
- Gain extra income (money has little or no effect once you are comfortable enough; more materialistic people are less happy)
- Stay wholesome (subjective health, not objective health, matters)
- Gain as much knowledge as you can (no effect)

Alter your appearance by moving to a sunnier place (no effect) You've probably noted that it would be difficult, expensive, or even impossible to change any of these situations. And even if you could change every aspect of the aforementioned situation, your happiness would not be significantly affected. Why? since they barely explain between 8 and 15% of the variation in enjoyment. The good news is that there are a number of internal factors that are simpler to alter and will positively affect your happiness more. The last variable, V, is all about these internal situations.

### **V: Voluntary Variables**

The three categories of voluntary variables, which make up around 40% of your happiness:

- feeling good about the past (e.g., satisfaction, contentment, fulfillment, pride, and serenity)
- feeling optimistic about the future (e.g., optimism, hope, faith, and trust)
- feeling good about the present (e.g., joy, ecstasy, calm, test, ebullience, pleasure, and flow)
- You will feel happy if you have more good feelings about the present, the past, and the future.
- Change your feelings about the past, your beliefs about the future, and how you interact with the present in order to increase your degree of happiness over the long term.

### **Ways to improve the happiness about past**

Martin Seligman offers three strategies:

- ❖ Don't hold on to the notion that your present will determine your future. This notion fosters an unhelpful level of indifference toward life. The solution is simple. Simply acknowledge that you have some degree of control over life. You can improve your mood. You can improve your success. Of course, if you work hard and are persistent, you can do a lot of wonderful things.
- ❖ Be appreciative of your past positive experiences. The good things that have happened to you in the past are heightened by gratitude. Writing a gratitude letter or keeping a gratitude diary about the things, events, or people you are grateful for can help you cultivate feelings of gratitude for your past.
- ❖ Learn to overlook past transgressions. It all comes down to letting go of the ability of awful past experiences to engender resentment in you. You are aware that harbouring resentments, anger, resentment, pity, or any other bad feeling about a past experience will make you less happy. To practice forgiveness, Seligman suggests the R.E.A.C.H. approach. Figure 3 describes the top character strength of an individual

## The Top Character Strength

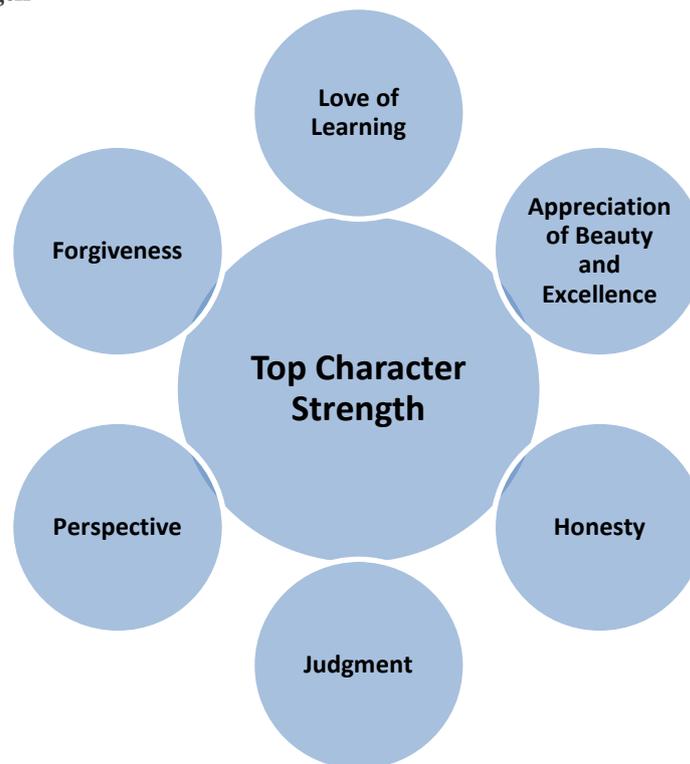


Figure-3

## Life Satisfaction and Personality

Life satisfaction could be a reflection of positive life events that have had an impact on a person. These encounters can spur individuals to pursue and accomplish their objectives (Frisch,1999;Frischet et al.,2005).Two primary emotions can influence how people view their lives. Both hope and optimism are made up of cognitive processes that are frequently focused on achieving and perceiving goals. A single scale called the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is used to assess a person's sense of self-worth, well-being, and general contentment with life (Diener,Sapyta,&Suh,1998). The idea of self-esteem and the various ways that objects and events are seen by people were entirely mediating between positive attitudes and life satisfaction. According to a number of research, life satisfaction is definitely influenced by one's sense of self-worth. These results are also supported by a homeostatic model (Cummins et al.2002). One's own impression of one's level of life satisfaction can also be influenced by one's mood and view on life.

## 5. Findings :

Martin Seligman, Ph.D., asserts that people tend to focus less on the negative things in life the happier they are. They also have a propensity to like people more, which boosts general happiness and makes them feel satisfied with their lives at the time. "Good feelings counterbalance bad feelings." The idea holds that a person's sense of general wellbeing derives from within, from his or her own particular beliefs and goals. Like life pleasure, it differs from person to person; for some, it's family; for others, it's love; for still others, it's money or other material possessions. One could regard materialism as a value. Previous studies have shown that materialistic people tend to be men and that they also rate their level of life satisfaction lower than nonmaterialistic people.

The same is true for those who place a higher value on money than helping others because they may purchase the things they consider precious with their money. Materialistic people are less pleased with their lives because they are driven to acquire more and more possessions, which lose their worth after they are acquired. This cycle then drives these people to acquire more possessions, and so on. These materialistic people grow more unhappy if they do not have enough money to fulfill their want for more things. A hedonic treadmill has been used to describe this situation.

People who placed a high emphasis on customs and religion expressed greater life happiness. This also holds true for those who are said to regularly attend church and pray. Conveniently, the concept of religion and church is that they are altruistic, nonmaterialistic behaviours, which logically indicates why the reverse effect is true of people who prioritize the opposite principles. People who valued creativity and mutual respect—two more attributes that might appear unrelated to material goods—also expressed higher levels of life happiness.

## 6. Conclusion :

People who valued traditions and religion highly expressed a higher level of life happiness. The same is true for those who attend church often and pray a lot. Conveniently, the notion of religion and church is unselfish, nonmaterialistic deeds, which logically concludes why the reverse effect is true of people who prioritize opposing ideals. People who valued mutual respect and creativity—two additional attributes that might not seem to be tied to material goods—also expressed higher levels of life satisfaction.

## Ways to improve life satisfaction

Happiness starts the moment you do something to help someone else. People who consistently put others' needs above their own are happy and have no problems in life. They are less stressed and have greater mental health, according to a study.

Serving others is the point of life. However, you shouldn't expect anything in return when doing so; instead, your goal should be to minimize people's suffering. "To be effective, service to others must be sincere and originate from the heart." This teaches us that people should use their bodies, minds, and voices to benefit both themselves and other people.

## Recognize what matters to you the most.

It's crucial to frequently reflect on your personal ideals. I advise doing written self-discovery exercises (where you respond to profound, introspective existential questions) that you can revisit occasionally to reinforce. This will assist you in attracting positive conditions and chances, in addition to assisting you in making better judgments for yourself. Knowing exactly what you want out of life and how you want to interact with the world is also a really gratifying and peaceful sensation.

## Spend your time on worthwhile endeavors.

Everyone has specific activities they would do in their free time if they had no obligations. While not all of us are able to leave our current circumstances in order to pursue our true desires, we can all, at least in some little manner, satisfy our deepest desires for ourselves. For instance, if you wish to dedicate your life to animal welfare but your other responsibilities demand your attention, you can volunteer once a week at an animal shelter, give to charities, or post useful content on helping animals on social media. It is important to take even the smallest positive steps. It will be challenging to be authentic and you'll feel like something is missing if you spend your time on things that have no meaning to you. Make the most of your time since it is valuable.

## REFERENCES :

1. *6 simple ways to live a simple life*. (2022, October 19). Gratitude - The Life Blog. <https://blog.gratefulness.me/6-simple-tips-to-live-a-simple-life/>
2. *Life satisfaction, concept of*. (n.d.). SpringerLink. [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5\\_1649](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_1649)
3. *Life satisfaction*. (2022, December 14). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 23, 2022, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life\\_satisfaction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_satisfaction)
4. *Life satisfaction*. (n.d.). Psychology Wiki. Retrieved December 23, 2022, from [https://psychology.fandom.com/wiki/Life\\_satisfaction](https://psychology.fandom.com/wiki/Life_satisfaction)
5. *Quality of life*. (2022, October 16). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 23, 2022, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality\\_of\\_life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality_of_life)
6. *Relationships between life satisfaction, meaning in life, hope, and COVID-19 fear for Turkish adults during the COVID-19 outbreak*. (n.d.). Frontiers. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.633384/full>
7. Roy, S. (2022, September 3). *Happiness formula: What makes you happy (What doesn't)*. The Happiness Blog. <https://happyproject.in/happiness-formula-equation/>