

Understanding Wellbeing

Lecture 4
Rev. Dr Sahaya G. Selvam
selvam@donbosco.or.tz



Institute of Youth Studies
Tangaza University College, Nairobi



Three means to Wellbeing according to Seligman

- 1. The Pleasant Life** or the "life of pleasantment": a life that successfully pursues positive emotions about the present, past and future.
- 2. The Good Life** or the "life of engagement": using your strengths and virtues to obtain abundant gratification in the main realms of life.
- 3. The Meaningful Life** or "life of affiliation": it is the use of your strengths and virtues to build a larger and permanent purpose of life.

→ These are the three contributing components to Happiness & wellbeing!

Selvam, Positive Psychology, 2014

Hedonia & Eudaimonia

- *hedonia* refers to those aspects of wellbeing that flow from pleasure-oriented activities,
- *eudaimonia* refers to fulfilment of our potential as human beings. This is an outcome of a virtuous life (good life).
- These terms originated in Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle.

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Sub-themes (according to Seligman)

- 1. The Pleasant Life:** Positive emotions
 - About the **past**: satisfaction, contentment, serenity
 - **Future**: optimism, hope, confidence, trust, faith
 - **Present**: positive affective states
- 2. The Good Life :** Strengths and Virtues
 - Gratification is more than just feelings, activities that we engage in; they could create a FLOW!
- 3. The Meaningful Life:** When strengths and virtues interact with others
 - Work, love, parenting

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Three levels of operation of PP

From Boniwell, I. (2006). Positive Psychology in a Nutshell. London: PWBC

- 1. Subjective level:** the study of positive experiences such as joy, wellbeing, satisfaction, contentment, happiness, optimism and flow. This level is about feeling good, rather than doing good or being a good person.
- 2. Individual Level:** to identify the constituents of the 'good life' and the personal qualities that are necessary for being a 'good person', through studying human strengths and virtues...
- 3. Community level:** the emphasis is on civic virtues, social responsibilities, nurturance, altruism, civility, tolerance, work ethics, positive institutions and other factors that contribute to the development of citizenship and communities.

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Three types of Wellbeing

- 1. Subjective Wellbeing:** affective condition of the individual in terms of happiness and satisfaction.
- 2. Psychological Wellbeing:** human flourishing – the outcome of striving towards perfection through self acceptance, growth, purpose, agency, autonomy, and relationships.
- 3. Social Wellbeing:** human functioning in terms of social- acceptance, actualization, contribution, coherence and integration

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Subjective Wellbeing (Diener)

- Ed Diener has been consistent in the use of the term Subjective Well-Being, to include happiness, life- satisfaction, presence of positive affect, and absence of negative affect.
- Subjective well-being is an experience of an individual, which excludes objective conditions like health, comfort, wealth.
- In some literature the terms subjective wellbeing and emotional wellbeing are used synonymously.

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Psychological Wellbeing (Ryff)

- Ryff and colleagues have been critical of identifying psychological health with subjective wellbeing, and have preferred to use the term 'human flourishing' or 'psychological wellbeing'.
- In this understanding, wellbeing is not synonymous with happiness, and their approach to defining wellbeing is clearly in terms of *eudaimonia*. Here, wellbeing is defined as "the striving for perfection that represents the realization of one's true potential."

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Psychological Wellbeing (Ryff)

Psychological wellbeing is measured in terms of six factors:

- **self acceptance** – positive attitude towards the self with its multiple aspects including impressions of past life;
- **personal growth** – feeling of continued development and being open to new experience;
- **purpose in life** – having goals and a sense of direction in life;
- **environmental mastery** – feeling competent and being able to manage one's environment, which includes also the community of people;
- **autonomy** – ability for self-determination, independence and internal regulation; and finally,
- **positive relations with others** – having warm and satisfying relationship with others, and being capable of empathy, affection and intimacy.

Social Wellbeing

The third type of wellbeing that challenges the individual emphasis implied in the subjective and psychological approaches to wellbeing. Scholars have evolved constructs and measures to examine, what they call, social wellbeing (Larson, 1993).

Social Wellbeing (Keyes)

Social wellbeing is considered in terms of the following five dimensions:

- **social acceptance** – positive attitude towards others;
- **social actualization** – being optimistic about the future of the society;
- **social contribution** – believing that individuals have something valuable to give to the society;
- **social coherence** – understanding the social world as intelligible, logical and predictable; and,
- **social integration** – feeling part of the community and experiencing a sense of belonging.