EXPLORING EUDAIMONIC AND HEDONIC COMPONENTS OF HAPPINESS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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Abstract

In addition to assisting students in addressing stressful challenges, psychologists who work as student counsellors are also expected to focus on the development of strengths and potential. This implies, amongst others, to explore empirically students' conceptions of happiness. This article reports on a mixed methods study that investigated the concept of happiness, with specific reference to subjective and eudaimonic well-being, among a sample of university students. Quantitative results substantiated findings reported in the international literature. Qualitative analysis suggested that the participants regarded happiness as the absence of life stressors that are related to life circumstances. An integration of the data indicated that the university experience is intimately related to the pursuit and realisation of eudaimonic goals, which could result in collective subjective well-being. It is argued that student counsellors could play an important role in enhancing eudaimonic well-being.

Keywords: Eudaimonic well-being, happiness, mixed methods, positive psychology, student counselling, subjective well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the Good Life has been a prominent focus of philosophical discourse from ancient to modern times (Park & Peterson, 2009). The field of positive psychology revived this focus by introducing the concept to mainstream psychology. Subsumed under the umbrella term 'The Good Life' is the broad concept of happiness (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Amidst ongoing debate, researchers have distinguished between hedonic and eudaimonic traditions of happiness (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener & King, 2008; Waterman, 2008). Hedonism, which is conceptualised as subjective well-being (SWB), refers to the maximisation of pleasure and minimisation of pain (Diener, 2013). In contrast, the concept of eudaimonic well-being (EWB) refers to optimal personal development through dedication to intrinsic values, and goals that can add purpose and meaning to life (Waterman, 2008). A study of both the international and the South African literature on the topics of SWB and EWB revealed two limitations.

Firstly, researchers have predominantly used quantitative measuring instruments, developed in Western contexts, to collect data for SWB and EWB studies (Diener, 2013; Waterman et al., 2010). This could give rise to the likelihood that empirical studies base conceptions of happiness solely on the perspectives and values of Western researchers (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011). This limitation could be addressed by giving voice to non-Western, e.g. South African, participants' perspectives on happiness by means of qualitative enquiry. However, the qualitative approach has also been criticised for, amongst others, its subjective empirical orientation (Creswell, 2014). A mixed methods research approach draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby compensating for respective methodological limitations (Creswell, 2014). Delle Fave et al. (2012) precisely advocate this by encouraging the use of mixed methods approaches when studying happiness and related concepts from, amongst others, non-Western perspectives.

The second limitation relates to SWB and EWB research conducted within the South African context. Notwithstanding growing evidence of South African research related to well-being and happiness (Wissing, 2013), reference to empirical data appears to be scant. A search of the SABINET database, which hosts prominent South African research journals, using the keywords happiness, subjective well-being, and eudaimonic well-being, individually and in various combinations, resulted in only a small number of relevant hits – this in contrast to the wider international focus (Diener, 2013). One South African population that has received particularly limited empirical attention in this regard is constituted by students who make use of student development and support services.

Psychologists, such as student counsellors, who deliver student development and support services within university context, have daily interactions with young people who function in stressful environments (Van Lingen & De Jager, 2011). In addition to supporting students in addressing stressful challenges, for example depression and anxiety, student counsellors are also responsible for focussing on the development of strengths and potential (De Villiers, 2008). However, this does not imply promoting positive psychology-related topics such as SWB and EWB in an unconditional manner. Rather, student development and support researchers ought to explore empirically their target population's conceptions of, amongst others, happiness, in order to inform relevant service delivery (Van Lingen & De Jager, 2011).

The study of SWB and EWB among student populations is not only an abstract exercise, but could also inform practical service delivery, thereby potentially benefiting students' well-being (De Villiers, 2008). Furthermore, the use of a mixed methods research design could not only provide novel and valuable information to student counsellors but also contribute to the growing body of empirical data related to well-being and happiness in the South African literature.

This article reports on a mixed methods study that investigated the concepts of SWB and EWB among a sample of South African students. It will be argued that the realisation of EWB-related values is intimately linked to the students' experiences within the university context and could ensue in collective SWB. Additionally, it is contended that research related to well-being ought to be placed on the student development and support research agenda. In the next section the study is conceptualised in relation to pertinent literature. Then, the research methodology and results are discussed. The article concludes with a summary of the findings.

2. TWO CONCEPTIONS OF HAPPINESS: SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND EUDAIMONIC WELL-BEING

The concept of SWB is defined as the cognitive and affective evaluations of the quality of a person's life in terms of the presence and relative frequency of positive and negative emotions (Diener, 2013). This definition covers two broad domains, namely life satisfaction, as well as positive and negative affect (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Life satisfaction refers to the subjective evaluation of a person's life as a whole (Diener, 2013). Positive and negative affect denote the subjective experience of positive (e.g. joy) and/or negative (e.g. guilt) emotions. Life satisfaction and positive affect are associated with SWB, while negative affect is inversely related to SWB (Diener, 2013). Additionally, positive affect has been linked to creative problem-solving, enhanced coping and goal achievement, and signifies optimal functioning (Fredrickson, 2002).

Measures of SWB tend to indicate the frequency of subjectively evaluated positive affect, but not the sources (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Hence, high scores on measures of SWB are not necessarily indicative of the realisation of meaning or purpose (Kashdan et al., 2008).

EWB refers to striving for the fulfilment of one's highest potential, realisation of significant values, and the discovery of meaning and purpose (Waterman, 2008). Positive affect could ensue from eudaimonic-related pursuits, but its primary goal is not the subjective experience of happiness per se. Rather, eudaimonia is associated with doing what is worth doing based on the realisation of objective values, such as knowledge, friendship and ethics (Waterman, 2008). Thus, while SWB is concerned with whether people are happy, eudaimonia focusses on why people are happy (Kashdan et al., 2008).

A cross-country mixed methods study (including South African data) that investigated hedonic and eudaimonic components of happiness revealed that family and social relations were strongly associated with happiness and meaningfulness (Delle Fave et al., 2011). South African participants in the study reported high ratings of spirituality/religion with regard to happiness and meaning in life (Delle Fave et al., 2011).

3. GOAL OF THE STUDY

This mixed methods study investigated the concept of happiness, with specific reference to SWB and EWB, among a sample of South African university students. The overarching research question was: What are South African students' conceptions of happiness?

The three specific research aims were to (1) investigate SWB and EWB among South African students by means of quantitative questionnaires, (2) explore students' perspectives about happiness from a qualitative perspective, and (3) integrate the quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic understanding of South African students' conceptions of happiness.

On an applied level, the findings could offer insight and understanding for psychologists, specifically student counsellors, who deliver services within university settings. In terms of a basic contribution, the study aims to contribute to the emerging body of South African knowledge related to SWB and EWB.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

A sequential explanatory mixed methods research approach which enabled the author to examine participants' conceptions of happiness from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective served as research design (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative strand of the study was aimed at describing a general picture of participants' sense of happiness by means of established questionnaires. The qualitative component extended and explained the general quantitative picture in order to provide a more accurate representation of participants' conceptions of happiness.

4.2 Participants and setting

Quantitative data were collected by means of purposive sampling. Criteria for inclusion in the study were that participants had to be 18 years of age or older, enrolled for their first year of academic study, and attending generic student development and support programmes at the university where the study was conducted. Data were collected during the first student development and support programme contact session, prior to any content being presented. The quantitative sample consisted of 165 participants (female = 113; Mage = 20.51; SD = 1.69).

Subsequent to the quantitative data analysis (two weeks following data collection), a sample of convenience was used to collect qualitative data. Open invitations to participate in the qualitative study were sent to all participants who formed part of the quantitative sample.

A total of 60 participants provided qualitative data (female = 41; Mage = 20.35; SD = 1.49).

4.3 Data collection

Quantitative data were collected by means of a questionnaire package that consisted of four sections, namely (1) informed consent, (2) biographical information, (3) four research questionnaires, and (4) space to provide additional information. Participants completed the questionnaire package, subject to ethical consent, in approximately 30 minutes. They were then requested to seal the completed questionnaire package in an envelope and place it in a box provided by the researcher.

Following a similar process as described above, qualitative data were collected by means of narrative sketches, which took approximately 40 minutes to complete. The quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are discussed below.

4.3.1 The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being

The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being (QEWB) is a 21-item measure that covers a range of elements associated with EWB (e.g. “I believe I have discovered who I really am”) (Waterman et al., 2010). Participants indicate their agreement with each statement on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale presents with good levels of internal consistency among Western (α = .86) (Waterman et al., 2010) and South African (α = .72 - .82) (Boshoff, 2012) samples. Mean scores range from 54.63 (SD = 10.26) to 56.83 (SD = 10.78) among Western samples (Waterman et al., 2010).

4.3.2 The Subjective Happiness Scale

The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) serves as a psychometrically sound measure of global happiness (α = .79 - .94) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Respondents rate a total of four items on different Likert scales, each ranging from 1 to 7 (e.g. “In general, I consider myself: (1) 'not a very happy person' to (7) 'a very happy person'”). Mean scores range between 4.02 (SD = 0.93) to 5.62 (SD = 0.96) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

4.3.3 The Satisfaction with Life Scale

The The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a 5-item measure of a person's subjective evaluation of life satisfaction (e.g. “In most ways my life is close to my ideal”) (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffen et al., 1985). Participants respond to a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicate that the measure is reliable among American (.87) (Diener et al., 1985) and South African (α = .74 - .84) samples (Boshoff, 2012). Hayes and Joseph (2003) reported an international mean score of 24.1 (SD = 6.9).

4.3.4 The Scales of Positive and Negative Experience

The Scales of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), a 12-item questionnaire, includes six items to assess positive (e.g., joyful), and six items to assess negative (e.g. unpleasant) feelings (Diener et al., 2010). Participants evaluate how often they experienced the listed feelings, over the past four weeks, on a scale ranging from 1 (very rarely or never) to 5 (very often or always). Three sets of scores can be assessed, namely (1) overall affect balance (α = .89) (score range: -24 (lowest affect balance) to 24 (highest affect balance possible), (2) positive (α = .81), and (3) negative feelings (α = .87) (score range: 6-30) (Diener et al., 2010).

4.3.5 Narrative sketches

Narrative sketches, which refer to documents written by participants to depict their stories and perspectives about the theme in question (Giorgi, 1985), were used to collect qualitative data. The instruction to the narrative sketch read as follows: Use the space below to reflectively discuss (approximately 1-5 pages in length) your thoughts, feelings and perspectives on the following questions: (1) What does 'happiness' mean to you? (2) How happy are you and what makes you happy? (3) Think back to a time in your life when you were happy. What happened, how did you feel and what did you experience?

4.4 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse and report on the biographical information of the sample. The Pearson product-moment correlation co-efficient was used to investigate the relationships between the quantitatively measured constructs. The quantitative data analysis process was managed by means of the software package IBM SPSS version 21 (IBM SPSS Inc., 2012). Guidelines, as reported in the aforementioned sections, were utilised to interpret the results.

Qualitative content analysis served as qualitative research design. Data were analysed by following five interrelated steps, namely (1) familiarisation, (2) inducing themes, (3) coding, (4) elaboration, and (5) interpretation (Creswell, 2014). The software programme Atlas.ti, version 6.2 was used to manage this process. Trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis was ensured through prolonged exposure, keeping a reflexive journal, member checks and using verbatim quotes to substantiate findings.

4.5 Ethical considerations

All participants provided individual written informed consent. Participants were not requested to include personal identifying information such as surnames, names or student numbers. No course credit or financial benefits were offered for participation. The Research Ethics Committee of the university where the data were collected granted permission to conduct the study.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Quantitative results and discussion

Data and descriptive statistics obtained from the quantitative questionnaires are presented in Table 1. The mean score obtained on the QEWB of 58.43 (SD = 11.52) is slightly higher than the scores (54.63 (SD = 10.26) to 56.83 (SD = 10.78)) reported by Waterman et al. (2010). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient score indicated that the QEWB is reliable (α = .84).

Table 1: Data and descriptive statistics

Questionnaire	Subscales	*M*	*SD*	α
QEWB		58.43	11.52	.84
SHS		4.88	1.43	.77
SWLS		23.16	6.02	.72
SPANE	*Overall affect balance*	6.41	8.91	.88
	Positive affect balance	21.87	4.72	.85
	Negative affect balance	15.46	4.90	.82

Note: QWEB = Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being
SHS = Subjective Happiness Scale
SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale
SPANE = Scales of Positive and Negative Experience

Both the mean score of 4.88 (SD = 1.43) and Cronbach's alpha (.77) reported on the SHS are comparable to internationally reported data (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). An interpretation of the SHS mean scores suggested that participants were reasonably happy individuals, experiencing frequent positive emotions and were relatively satisfied with their lives (Lyubomirsky, 2008). This interpretation is supported by the results that emerged from the SWLS and the SPANE.

The SWLS presented with an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α = .72). A mean score of 23.16 (SD = 6.02) on the SWLS corresponds to internationally reported data (Hayes & Joseph, 2003). Scores between 25 and 21 can be interpreted as pointing to slightly satisfied with life (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). This suggests that while participants were relatively satisfied with some aspects of their lives, other aspects may require attention.

Participants reported higher scores on positive (M = 21.87; SD = 4.72; α = .85) versus negative (M = 15.46; SD = 4.90; α = .82) affect balance. The overall affect balance mean score on the SPANE was calculated at 6.41 (SD = 8.91; α = .88). The foregoing mean scores and alpha values parallel internationally reported data (Diener et al., 2010). These results suggest that participants, notwithstanding first year university stressors, experienced more positive than negative affect.

The Pearson product moment correlations are reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlations

	QEWB	SHS	SWLS	SPANE Overall	SPANE Pos
SHS	.61**				
SWLS	.52**	.52**			
SPANE Overall	.66**	.57**	.52**		
SPANE Pos	.62**	.56**	.48**	.92**	
SPANE Neg	-.60**	-.52**	-.48**	-.93**	-.71**

Note: **p < 0.01 (two tailed)
QWEB = Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being
SHS = Subjective Happiness Scale
SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale
SPANE Overall = Scales of Positive and Negative Experience (Overall affect balance)
SPANE Pos = Scales of Positive and Negative Experience (Positive affect)
SPANE Neg = Scales of Positive and Negative Experience (Negative affect)

A strong and statistically significant positive correlation was detected between the QEWB and the SHS scores. This finding is consistent with data reported in the literature (Waterman et al., 2010). One interpretation is that positive affect ensues from the pursuit of eudaimonic goals (Waterman, 2008). However, the literature also suggests that the presence of positive affect has beneficial effects, such as enabling people to access and elicit broadened cognitive functions skills which could influence EWB (Fredrickson, 2002).

Strong and statistically significant correlations emerged between the QEWB and the three SWB-related domains, namely satisfaction with life (SWLS), positive (SPANE Pos), and negative (SPANE Neg) affect. The QEWB was positively associated with the SWLS and positive affect. These findings suggest that participants who reported higher EWB scores were also more likely to be satisfied with their lives and experience a greater frequency of positive emotions. In contrast, participants who reported higher negative experiences were more likely to report lower scores on the QEWB.

Negative affect, as measured by the SPANE, was also inversely associated with the SWLS and the SHS. This result supports existing data on the inverse relationship between negative affect and the concept of happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

5.2 Qualitative results

Two prominent themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis. These are discussed below.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Description and sources of happiness

Participants described happiness as the absence of stressors. That is, happiness was equated to the absence of negative emotions. The following quote substantiates this interpretation:

P 141: Happiness to me simply means to live without stress, depression and anxiety.

Even though SWB is inversely associated with negative affect (see Table 2), Lyubomirsky (2008) suggests that happiness does not imply the complete absence of negative emotions. However, what emerged from the data analysis was that participants' negative affect may be related to stressful life circumstances:

P 19: Life is hard for me … mother is unemployed … travel far to university … not so much to be happy about …

Therefore, stressful life circumstances, and not negative affect as such, could have contributed to participants' experiences of happiness, or rather, unhappiness. Additionally, participants offered numerous examples of sources of happiness, which were consistent with the literature (Delle Fave et al., 2011; Lyubomirsky, 2008). The most cited examples were: relationships (P 26: I live to be with other people ... want to do things for other people …), positive affect (P 41: I am happy when I am in a good mood), religion (P 27: … belief that God has my interests at heart … makes me feel good …) and hedonic factors (P 33: … enough pocket money, makes me happy ... can buy new clothes or a cell phone ...). A fifth source of happiness, not necessarily reported in the literature, emerged from the qualitative analysis, namely university-related factors. This aspect is discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Theme 2: University-related factors

While hedonic happiness can result from a variety of sources, eudaimonia is experienced in connection with a limited number of specific sources, for example activities related to self-realisation and the pursuit of goals that offer a sense of purpose and meaning (Waterman et al., 2010). The majority of participants (n = 58) who provided qualitative data (N = 60) referred to gaining entry into higher education as a source of happiness. Participant 6 described it as follows:

When I received my [university] admission letter ... couldn't believe it ... 'Am I going to varsity?'... jumped for joy.

Participants' reference to the value of university entrance was interpreted in terms of the realisation of eudaimonic-related goals:

P 60: Education is the most important thing in life. Without it happiness will just be an empty feeling.

In addition to the apparently individualist-perspective communicated by the foregoing quotes, a collective picture was also sketched. More specifically, participants acknowledged the sacrifices made by family members. This seemingly resulted in a sense of collective SWB:

P 33: Having a mother and family who loves you makes one happy ... knowing that they are sacrificing for your education ... this is lot of responsibility … feel so proud.

It subsequently became apparent that not only access but also active pursuit of university goals were important and served as a potential source of happiness:

P 13: After I have completed my work or studied for a test, I feel happy ... makes me feel proud and satisfied of the hard work that I had done.

In eudaimonic terms the aforementioned can be described as living life according to intrinsically meaningful goals and pursuing meaningful goals (Waterman, 2008). This was highlighted by participant 52:

Dedication to important goals and positive resolutions makes one experience real happiness ... example is my academic results this semester ... very good marks … sense of pride …

In contrast to the aforementioned, participants also suggested that access to university at the expense of intrinsically meaningful goals did not necessarily result in a sense of happiness:

P 55: … pressurised by my father to study … engineering ... demotivated and unhappy ... changed my course to nursing … my passion ...

The qualitative data subsequently suggested that the participants' sense of SWB could, in part, be due to the pursuit and realisation eudaimonic-related goals afforded by access to university study. Hence, the qualitative analysis assisted in contextualising the general quantitative data. This integration is further explicated in the next section.

5.3 Quantitative and qualitative results: Integration

The quantitative results of this study (see Tables 1 and 2) confirmed previous findings reported in the international literature (Diener, 2013). The qualitative data added a contextual lens through which the quantitative data could be interpreted. Amongst other things, participants suggested that the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect served as important indicators of happiness:

P 57: Happiness is when your heart is not kneeling under stress ...

This qualitative finding substantiated the strong and significant inverse correlational relationship ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.01$) between happiness (SHS) and the negative affect (SPANE Neg). However, the qualitative data also suggested that stressful life circumstances, which are not necessarily detectable via quantitative questionnaires, could play a role in students' conceptions of happiness:

P 39: When you have enough money, food and a place to stay, you will be happy … embarrassed to say it, but I don't have this …

The aforementioned indicates that social factors related specifically to both the South African and other contexts ought to be considered when investigating happiness. Yet, against a backdrop of apparently stressful life circumstances, access to education could serve as the impetus to pursue goals that provide a sense of purpose and meaning.

The qualitative data suggested that being accepted for university study, and active involvement in accompanying academic-related activities, could serve as sources of happiness among first-year students. These academic activities, which reflect the pursuit of goals that can provide purpose and meaning, could be described as eudaimonic in nature. Moreover, it could also result in collective SWB:

P 2: Getting into university opened my eyes … give me and my family hope for the future …

The suggested qualitative relationship between EWB and SWB, as indicated by the aforementioned quotes, contextualised the significant positive correlations ($p < 0.01$) that were detected between the QEWB, and the SHS ($r = 0.61$), SPANE ($r = 0.66$) and SWLS ($r = 0.52$). Additionally, the mean score calculated on the QEWB was slightly higher (see Table 1) than internationally reported data (Waterman et al., 2010). These results, when viewed collectively, suggest that eudaimonic values, such as the acquisition of knowledge and self-development, are closely related to the students' experiences within the university context.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate South African students' conceptions of happiness with specific reference to SWB and EWB. Quantitative results were consistent with internationally reported data (Diener, 2013). Additionally, it indicated that participants experienced more positive than negative affect, were reasonably satisfied with their lives, and scored relatively higher than international samples on a measure of EWB.

The qualitative results contextualised the quantitative findings. More specifically, they indicated that participants mostly regarded happiness as the absence of negative emotions, which could, in part, be attributed to stressful life experiences. Aspects related to stressful life experiences, for example unemployment and poverty, point to some of the contextual factors that ought to be considered when studying happiness within a South African context.

The foregoing findings are limited due to the small and homogenous purposeful quantitative (N = 165) and convenient qualitative (N = 60) samples that were used. While the findings may provide a relatively valid and reliable picture of first-year students' experiences at one university, researchers ought to be wary of generalising findings to other contexts. It is suggested that future studies make use of larger and more diverse sample sizes.

A further limitation relates to the use of the self-report quantitative questionnaires as data collection method. It could be argued that the study of happiness is fraught with possible social desirability. Hence, notwithstanding the guarantee of anonymity, the possibility cannot be excluded that a portion of the participants provided data in a socially desirable manner. Nonetheless, there are few better ways to gauge people's experiences regarding happiness than the use of self-report questionnaires (Kashdan et al., 2008). To address this, researchers could consider including a measure of social desirability as part of future happiness studies.

The Good Life tends to unfold over time (Park & Peterson, 2009). Hence, future studies ought to consider utilising longitudinal research designs that could provide insight into possible changes over time.

Success at university is associated with the pursuit of eudaimonic-related goals: fulfilment of one's highest potential and the realisation of intrinsically meaningful values. Within the South African context many students may pin their personal hopes, as well as those of their families on succeeding at university. Thus, the realisation of eudaimonic goals within an academic context appears to be intimately linked to students' university experiences. Moreover, the pursuit of eudaimonic-related goals could serve as the impetus for collective positive affect and life satisfaction.

On the question of how the research results could contribute towards dealing with happiness in the context of university counselling and academic development, the following three implications appear relevant:

- First, student counsellors could draw on SWB and EWB theoretical perspectives to inform developmental programmes offered to students. A rich body of positive psychology literature has pointed to the potentially valuable effects of approaching stressful challenges from such affirming perspectives (De Villiers, 2008; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2008).
- Second, the qualitative data indicated that social relationships served as a prominent source of happiness among the sample. Student counsellors should consider focussing on group-based approaches, where students could form social support groups when delivering developmental programmes.
- Thirdly, the qualitative data suggested that the mere act of enrolling for academic studies could serve as a source of SWB and EWB. Student counsellors, and others, should consider offering developmental programmes to students during this period of initial entry into the higher education system. Such a proactive approach could assist in enhancing well-being among students. Moreover, such a proactive developmental approach could be of value to students in developing the necessary resilience to manage stressors effectively if and when they arise (De Villiers, 2008).

Student counsellors could subsequently play an important role in assisting students in pursuing and realising eudaimonic-related goals, thereby enhancing the levels of collective SWB and EWB. However, given the paucity of reported empirical data in this field, it is suggested that well-being-related research be placed on the student development and support research agenda. Applied research in this context could offer tangible benefits to students:

P1: Being happy has many advantages for university students … motivates one to approach other people … helps one to deal with the ups and downs of life … makes one more positive to cope with challenges …

Given student counsellors' limited engagement in the broader field of positive psychology, they still need to develop the benefit of critical distance. Subsequently, it is hoped that this study, notwithstanding its limitations, could serve as a starting point, not only in studying well-being-related concepts, but also in applying lessons learned within the student counselling field. This echoes a broader focus of discourse within the field of psychology: to generate more discussion in a variety of contexts on what it means to live the Good Life (Park & Peterson, 2009).

7. NOTES

1. Coding convention: P: participant

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