

# Subjective Well-Being in Taiwanese College Students with Gender Differences by Delivering Video-Based Interventions

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## Abstract

This study was intended to explore the subjective well-being (SWB) of different genders in Taiwanese college students from the perspective of Positive Psychology by delivering video-based interventions. Participants were 310 college students (104 males, 206 females) from 6 classes of general education courses. Two video clips eliciting two female engineers were used for intervention and played in a random order in different classes. The participants were asked to respond to the SWB scale before and after the videos played. The results indicated that after the participants exposed to video-based interventions, their SWB, psychological, social, and emotional well-being increased significantly in the post-test. Gender differences were also found to be significant. In the pre-test, female students were higher than male students in SWB, social, and emotional well-being. In the post-test, female students were higher than male students in SWB and social well-being. The results implied that female students were more concerned with social relationships and social mission in the social contexts as compared to male students. In conclusion, this study has evidenced an effect of video-based interventions to increase SWB and psychological, social, and emotional well-being in Taiwanese college students. It is suggested to promote SWB of people at other developmental stages through diverse video-based interventions to fulfill human well-being in the future.

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## Introduction

Subjective well-being (SWB) of Taiwanese college students of different genders has not been explored in the context of higher education. Previous research findings have indicated that there is a need to promote SWB of Taiwanese college students due to their low level of positive emotional experiences and SWB [1]. Since SWB is also associated with gender inequality in a society where men and women perceived SWB differently. Gender differences are influenced by cultural factors and traditional beliefs in gender expectations, attitudes and gender stereotypes towards men and women. Furthermore, gender differences in SWB have been related to level of gender equality in a society. However, the findings of gender differences in SWB have been inconsistent cross studies, there is still room for clarifying whether SWB of different genders exist or not in college students.

Meanwhile, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [3] has intended eagerly to achieve the goal for sustainable development of human being by 2030 with 17 sustainable development guidelines (SDGs). Among these guidelines, Guideline 3 is to acquire good health and well-being for groups at all stages of development. Guideline 5 is to promote gender equality to raise up women's right. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) calls on nations to promote personal, social well-being to optimize human well-being and to achieve United Nations' sustainable development goals. These goals would be expected to accomplish by positive psychological interventions (PPIs) developed from the research and practices in Positive Psychology to increase SWB and actively promote quality of life for individuals at all stages of development [4]. In this study, the purpose was to detect a positive effect of PPIs on SWB by delivering video-based interventions and gender differences in SWB Taiwanese college students were expected to be evidenced as well.

## SWB from the Perspective of Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology as advocated by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi [5] has become one major approach for research and application on SWB. Psychologists and educators have expanded the influences in construction for theory and practice for interventions to develop evidence-based PPIs. With applying the research related to Positive Psychology, planned intervention programs have been delivered to all stages of development to promote individuals' SWB and administrated across different developmental stages for children, adolescents, college students, adults, and the elderly. With the aims to promote well-being at the individual, family, workplace, and socio-cultural levels, these PPIs have been implemented successfully to promote SWB with positive changes nationwide involving in positive concepts such as meaning, strength, savoring, optimism, empathy, and kindness [6]. For example, in Australia, school-based PPIs have started more than a decade ago to address on adolescent anxiety and well-being needs, including hope, gratitude, serenity, resilience, and character strengths in students who attend to positive education in school-based PPIs [7].

Based on the idea that happiness and well-being are built on the energy of human life and personal growth and thriving, Ryff and Keyes [8] have synthesized the research lines of happiness and well-being and integrated emotional well-being and positive life functions into the theoretical framework of SWB. Emotional well-being embraces

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life satisfaction, positive emotion, and negative emotion. Positive psychological functions are consisted with psychological well-being and social well-being. Among those well-being measures, emotional well-being and psychological well-being remain at the individual level whereas social well-being emphasizes the integration and cohesion of individuals and society. While continuing to integrate research lines of happiness and well-being, Keyes and Mamagyar-Moe [9] went on to establish age-appropriate SWB measurements to explore the relationship between SWB, job performance and health status in adults.

### Taiwanese college students' SWB

Different from adults and other stages of development, college students are situated in a transition period from adolescence to adulthood. In learning environment and workplace, many Taiwanese college students feel anxious and unhappy in the face of academic pressures, interpersonal relationships, career decisions and family relations. Schreiner [10] stresses that educators should assist college students to develop their strengths, design for individualized success paths, set up personal goals, and complete tasks to improve SWB in the process of learning. If college students can often feel positive emotions in their daily lives, actively invest in life and learning, that will lead them to achieve goals and then to look for a deeper meaning of life. Taiwanese college students who get involved in social interactions and social tasks in social contexts as volunteers displayed medium and high levels of SWB and psychological well-being than their non-volunteer peers [11]. Another way to improve their SWB is to observe the experience of others to presuppose their own lives by imagining the good life of others. Tseng [2] has designed fictional career situations to guide college students to evaluate the job satisfaction of others, reflected in their self-evaluation of the desire for perfection. Tseng has found that college students desire a happy and meaningful life. Among many indicators of happiness, high income is one of the important conditions. They are looking forward to the future life with no fear and craving for living with a good quality of work and life. However, the researcher has suggested that the average level of SWB of Taiwanese college students is lower than those in other nations. Therefore, there is a need to increase positive emotional experiences and SWB in Taiwanese college students.

Tov and Diener [12] have argued that in different cultures, people have a grasp of what happiness is and the desire to have happiness is regarded as a necessary condition for a good life. Happiness is embedded in cultural connotations and the meaning of happiness and good life identified in a specific cultural category may not be applicable to another different culture. From the perspective of cultural psychology, Lu [13] has elaborated that European and American cultures adopt a personally oriented view of happiness, with the individual responsibility and directly pursuing happiness, where East Asian culture adopts a socially oriented view of happiness, with role responsibility and dialectical balance as two main elements. In the Eastern cultures, SWB is related to the role responsibilities that the individual is given in the family and society. Accordingly, happiness and unhappiness are regarded as two sides of the coin as coexisting psychological states. The individual does not need to pursue happiness excessively but maintains a constant state between internal and external state as homeostasis. The conception of SWB as indicated by Confucian culture is influenced by family and social expectations as the collective well-being of individuals is to get integrated into society when they consider their own happiness.

### Gender differences in SWB

Tesch-Römer et al. [14] have argued gender differences in well-being at the sociocultural level. People's attitudes and gender stereotypes are some of the socio-cultural factors to cause gender differences in SWB. The research of gender differences in SWB has not yet reached a conclusion due to the object and measurement were varied across studies. Meisenberg and Woodley [15] have used a large scale of cross-national data to analyze gender differences in SWB. Their original prediction was that in patriarchal societies where men playing with traditional gender roles had a higher level of SWB than women, while in societies accepted gender equality, women had a higher level of SWB than men or at least same as men. What they have found was quite contradict from their prediction and most of the well-being measures of gender equality did not show significant gender differences. The researchers [14] argue that gender equality affects women's SWB more than men's SWB. Gender equality is associated with happiness and life satisfaction. In countries where gender inequality is generally accepted, gender equality is associated with women's low SWB. If SWB is measured in terms of life satisfaction, gender equality and women's SWB are negatively correlated and the results of correlations between well-being measures are only slightly positively affected by education.

The contradiction here is that in societies where gender equality is prevalent, revealing an awkward condition as the higher the status of women, the lower the satisfaction of life they have [14]. Napier et al. [16] believe that denial of gender discrimination is related to SWB, when women deny the gender discrimination expressed by sexist people, they perceive higher SWB. However, denial of sexism cannot be explained by the gradual elevation of women's social status. In other words, even if women's social status has been moved up to a high place in a society where gender equality has been promoted, it does not necessarily improve their SWB.

Egan and Perry [17] have proposed that gender identity is not a single-dimension concept but multi-oriented concepts in their Gender Identity Theory. Audette et al. [18] consider SWB in a relationship with gender equality, gender identity contributes to individual and social well-being, practice and experience in life, and achieve the goals pursued by individuals. On the other hand, Łapniewska [19] argues "what is a good standard of living in a gender equality context?" A good life is a concrete manifestation of SWB, however, gender equality does not necessarily improve SWB, at least for women. The above-mentioned research findings have been found contradictorily to the idea that gender equality promotes SWB. Gender equality or women's high status does not necessarily make women's happiness and satisfaction higher than men's, even if the results show that women's education and SWB are related positively. Batz and Tay [20] have claimed that there was no significant difference between genders and their findings did not show meaningful gender differences. The inconsistent findings stem from testing different aspects of SWB, and the researcher here argues that gender differences between different aspects of SWB need to be examined in a culture.

One of the intentions to detect gender differences in SWB is to understand that people of different genders benefit from gender equality or not [18]. To examine SWB in the context of gender equality, Łapniewska [19] claims there is still a need for improvement of women's SWB. Taking life satisfaction as an example, Ferreira Lima and Araujo de Moraes [21] have combined the results of studies from

years of 2005 to 2016 and the results have revealed that school satisfaction for boys significantly predicted boys' life satisfaction whereas family satisfaction for girls significantly predicted girls' life satisfaction. It implied that boys are more likely to go outdoors and girls spend more time at home. However, to get a conclusion like that, somehow, it seemed to be influenced by gender stereotypes. What about the results of the study which only looked at women? Diaz and Bui [22] have studied a group of 30-year-old Mexican and Mexican-American women with high femininity traits and high life satisfaction. Positive family support predicted for women's life satisfaction and positive affect. Women attach more importance to family support than others, to them, the more family support, the higher the SWB. The gap of gender differences is not completely affected by gender stereotypes, but the needs for different genders. Women's life satisfaction and positive emotions are more obviously affected by family support than men.

From the perspective of gender identity [17], there is a specific connection between SWB and gender-typed traits. Individual personality traits are linked to gendered traits related to men and women. For example, psychological well-being is associated with traditional masculinity traits, while masculine traits having higher psychological well-being. Gender role satisfaction is higher when an individual's gender and gender-typed behaviors are consistent [23]. Gender role satisfaction plays an intermediating role in the life satisfaction and egalitarian gender role endorsement [24]. The association between masculinity and SWB is positively correlated, that is, the stronger the masculine traits, the higher the SWB.

Another goal of gender equality is to narrow down the gender gap in society to promote the SWB of people of different genders [18]. In China, gender identity seems to be stable in college students, Hao and Niu [25] have found that there is no significant difference in the distribution of different gender-role types for male students and female students in their first year of college. The proportion of feminine gender roles in senior female students increased significantly whereas the proportion of masculine gender roles decreased significantly, but this change did not occur in male students. In their four years of college life, female students continue to identify traditional gender feminine roles as they stay in college. One possible explanation for the change in gender identity was that these girls were more affected by the learning environment and become more and more identified with traditional feminine gender roles. SWB of masculine and androgynous were significantly higher than those of male students and female students who were categorized in femininity and gender undifferentiated gender-role types.

Women are more vulnerable to environmental influences than men. If married women who receive support by their spouse and stay in the workplace that would in turn to reduce the pressures on their spouse and increase the SWB because of the flexibility of their spouse's gender concept. In Taiwan, Chang [26] clarified this possibility at the individual level, if a married man shows a positive attitude towards his spouse's entry into the workplace he would be more willing to share family care. There exists a positive correlation between the husband's gender-role identity and SWB. Even though, there is no significant relationship between the gender identity and happiness of married women as predicted by Chang's identity, gender, and SWB model. In short, this model could be applied to men and unmarried women but not to married women. Single women have a higher SWB than married women.

Moss-Racusin et al., [27] have designed workshop activities as an intervention in simulating gender equity simulation (WAGES) to eliminate gender bias in STEM, with three different test scenarios for video interventions for diversity in STEM (VIDS) to change viewers' perceived gender biases [28]. Manthey et al. [29] have adopted a video-based online guidance and found that the effects of cognitive intervention, whether making gratitude lists or writing about best possible selves in the future achieved sustained happiness for the interested individuals to increase SWB and an effect of the intervention last for a month.

### The current study

Yu, et. al., [30] have compiled a SWB scale for Taiwanese college students and referred to the theoretical framework of Keyes and Magear-Moe [9] for measuring psychological, social, and emotional well-being. Psychological well-being is the realization of meaningful life and self-potential when individuals face life challenges. Social well-being is concerned with the individual's social relations and social tasks in the social contexts. Emotional well-being is the emotional experience of individuals in life. The researchers found that the SWB of college students and the overall average fell in the moderate SWB as they build up the scale. Accordingly, one of the purposes of this current study was intended to optimize the SWB of Taiwanese college students by delivering video-based interventions as effective strategies and gender differences in their SWB were expected to be observed as well.

### Method

An experimental design with delivering video-based interventions and a survey were used to examine the SWB and gender differences in SWB of Taiwanese college students.

### Participants

The participants were Taiwanese college students from a private university in northern Taiwan. There were 317 students recruited from 6 classes of general studies (positive psychology, principles of developmental psychology, political psychology, two classes for each). A total of 310 participants completed the research, with 104 males and 206 females (33.50%, 66.50%, respectively). The ages of participants were ranged from 18 to 23, with a mean age of 20.52 (sd = 1.24).

### Procedures

The participants were presented to topics related to gender equality in class and asked to fill out the SWB scale, followed by delivering one of the two video clips as video-based interventions. After exposed to the video, the participants were asked to fill out the SWB scale again.

### Materials

The video clips featuring two female engineers in the documentary "A Day of a Woman in Science and Technology", illustrating the career and life of two female engineers. Two video clips were randomly played in different classes. The first one elicits a married female engineer in a nuclear family where her husband takes care of the family and the wife stays in the workplace. The wife works as a traffic engineering planner and the husband believes that his wife's work can be influential, so he decides to return home to take care of the family. The second one introduces a single, unmarried female engineer who works as an executive manager in the workplace.

Both engineers were happy women in their workplace no matter they were married or single. The length of playing of the first clip is 10'00" and the playing time of the second one is about 9'50".

### Instrument and scoring

#### The SWB scale

The SWB scale is compiled by Yu et al., [30] and modified to be suitable for measuring the SWB of Taiwanese college students with a reliability  $\alpha = 0.91$ . The scale is composed by 16 questions and divided into three well-being measures: questions 1-6 measuring for psychological well-being (e.g., I think my life is carefully planned and meaningful.), questions 7-11 measuring for social well-being (e.g., I do something meaningful to this society or community), and questions 12-16 measuring for emotional well-being (e.g., I am very satisfied with my current life and situation). The scale is rated by a 6-point rating scale, with 1-6 representing never been, once or twice, once a week, two to three times a week, almost every day, and every day, respectively. The higher the score, the higher the SWB (low SWB:  $16 \leq \text{total score} < 49$ , middle SWB:  $49 \leq \text{total score} \leq 70$ , high SWB:  $70 \leq \text{total score} \leq 96$ ).

#### Well-being measures

The mean score of SWB is the total score divided by 16, the mean score of psychological well-being is the sum of questions 1-6 divided by 6, the mean score of social well-being is the sum of questions 7-11 divided by 5, and the mean score of emotional well-being is the sum of questions 12-16 divided by 5. All well-being measures are abbreviated and listed as follows: subjective well-being in the pre-test as SWB1, psychological well-being in the pre-test as pwb1, social well-being in the pre-test as swb1, emotional well-being in the pre-test as ewb1, subjective well-being in the post-test as SWB2, psychological well-being in the post-test as pwb2, social well-being in the post-test as swb2, and emotional well-being in the post-test as ewb2.

### Results

#### SWB of Taiwanese college students

The total of SWB1 and SWB2 both fell in the middle level of SWB (mean = 53.42 for SWB1, mean = 54.65 for SWB2). The descriptive statistics including mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*sd*) of SWB and well-being measures (presented in mean scores) in the pre-test and post-test were listed in Table 1. As it can be seen in Table 1, the pwb1 was the highest well-being measure among the well-being measures in both pre- and post-tests.

Pair	Measure	M	Sd
1	pwb1	3.4694	.91102
	pwb2	3.5333	.97541
2	swb1	3.1200	.84043
	swb2	3.1916	.87204
3	ewb1	3.4006	1.15431
	ewb2	3.4974	1.18127
4	SWB1	3.3387	.84329
	SWB2	3.4153	.89654

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of SWB and Well-Being Measures (n = 310).

Regarding the effect of video-based interventions, the differences between paired comparisons of well-being measures in the pre- and post-tests were tested with t-tests. As it can be seen from Table 2, the differences between SWB and well-being measures reached at significant levels, showing that the video-based interventions effectively change the SWB of the participants. SWB2, pwb2, swb2, and ewb2 all increased significantly in the post-test.

To detect the participants' perceptions in a single or a married female engineer were different or not, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using the video clips as an independent variable and all well-being measures as dependent variables to examine the consistency of two video clips. The results were listed in Table 3 and indicated that two video clips made no significant differences in SWB and well-being measures. There was no difference in the response of the participants to the two video clips and their perceptions in a single or a married female engineer were not different.

#### Gender differences in well-being measures

The descriptive statistics of the responses of different genders in the pre- and post-tests were listed in Table 4. A series of one-way ANOVAs was conducted with gender as a between group variable and SWB and well-being measures as dependent variables. The results were presented in Table 5.

As it can be seen from Table 5, in the pre-test, female students were significantly higher than male students in SWB, swb1 and ewb1. In the post-test, female students were significantly higher than male students in SWB2 and swb2. The results indicated that female students displayed more involvement than male students in social relationships and social tasks in social contexts.

Pair		M	Sd	Se	T	Df	p-value
1	pwb1 - pwb2	.06398	.42859	.02434	2.628**	309	.009
2	swb1 - swb2	.07161	.41137	.02336	3.065**	309	.002
3	ewb1 - ewb2	.09677	.43525	.02472	3.915***	309	.000
4	SWB1 - SWB2	.07661	.29225	.01660	4.616***	309	.000

Table 2: The Results of t-tests in the Pre- and Post-tests. Note: *se* represents standard error



Variable		Pre-test			Post-test		
Gender	N	Measure	M	Sd	Measure	M	Sd
Male	104	pwb1	3.3830	.89010	pwb2	3.4247	.99754
Female	206	pwb1	3.5129	.92047	pwb2	3.5882	.96183
Total	310	pwb1	3.4694	.91102	pwb2	3.5333	.97541
Male	104	swb1	2.9538	.89843	swb2	3.0269	.90008
Female	206	swb1	3.2039	.79877	swb2	3.2748	.84763
Total	310	swb1	3.1200	.84043	swb2	3.1916	.87204
Male	104	ewb1	3.1923	1.24882	ewb2	3.3269	1.30095
Female	206	ewb1	3.5058	1.09164	ewb2	3.5835	1.10939
Total	310	ewb1	3.4006	1.15431	ewb2	3.4974	1.18127
Male	104	SWB1	3.1893	.87198	SWB2	3.2698	.94116
Female	206	SWB1	3.4141	.82026	SWB2	3.4888	.86623
Total	310	SWB1	3.3387	.84329	SWB2	3.4153	.89654

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Well-being Measures of Different Genders in the Pre- and Post-tests.

Measure		SS <sup>2</sup>	df	MS <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value
		Pre-test				
pwb1	Between-subjects	1.167	1	1.167	1.408	.236
	Within-subjects	255.292	308	.829		
	Total	256.459	309			
swb1	Between-subjects	4.321	1	4.321	6.220*	.013
	Within-subjects	213.935	308	.695		
	Total	218.256	309			
ewb1	Between-subjects	6.793	1	6.793	5.167*	.024
	Within-subjects	404.927	308	1.315		
	Total	411.720	309			
SWB1	Between-subjects	3.494	1	3.494	4.976*	.026
	Within-subjects	216.247	308	.702		
	Total	219.740	309			
		Post-test				
pwb2	Between-subjects	1.848	1	1.848	1.948	.164
	Within-subjects	292.141	308	.949		
	Total	293.989	309			
swb2	Between-subjects	4.245	1	4.245	5.666*	.018
	Within-subjects	230.733	308	.749		
	Total	234.978	309			
ewb2	Between-subjects	4.549	1	4.549	3.284	.071
	Within-subjects	426.628	308	1.385		
	Total	431.178	309			
SWB2	Between-subjects	3.313	1	3.313	4.164*	.042
	Within-subjects	245.058	308	.796		
	Total	248.371	309			

Table 5: Gender Differences in Well-Being Measures in the Pre- and Post-tests.

## Conclusion

This study examined the SWB of Taiwanese college students by delivering video-based interventions. In the pre-test, the well-being measures of college students from high to low is psychological well-being, emotional well-being, and social well-being, indicating that Taiwanese college students tend to be concerned with personal well-being prior to social well-being related to social involvement in social relations and social tasks. Video-based interventions as effective PPIs as an effect on SWB and well-being measures was evidenced. In the post-test, after video-based interventions delivered, not only SWB but also psychological, social, and emotional well-being measures increased significantly. The increase in emotional well-being was powerful showing that the participants experienced more positive emotions through the video-based interventions. However, since the total of SWB in the pre- and post-tests have fallen in the middle level of SWB, it implies that they still need to get integrated into society through social participation in the social contexts.

Regarding to the video clips used in the interventions, Taiwanese college students through the observation two female engineers with consistent responses cross videos, with no significant difference between their perceptions in a single and a married female engineer presented in two video clips. For the younger generations in Taiwan, either the engineer is a single woman or a married woman, her family-work lifestyle is a personal choice and a family life of "men inside, women outside" in a nuclear family is also acceptable.

Gender differences in SWB of Taiwanese college students were also found to be significant in some well-being measures. In the pre-test, female students displayed higher SWB, social, and emotional well-being than male students. In the post-test, gender differences were found in SWB and social well-being and female students outperformed than male students. As the results of gender comparisons indicated that female students get involved in relation to social relationships and social tasks in the social contexts and express a stronger feeling than male students connected to the community. The performance of female students is more inclined to the collective well-being emphasized in a Confucian culture society. However, Taiwanese college students need to participate more in community and social tasks to enhance social well-being. Particularly, male students need to be encouraged to participate more in social tasks and community connections in social contexts to enhance social well-being. As female students perceive the videos of female engineers who are connected to themselves and show a high level of social well-being. It is suggested that future research aims to convert the traditional "men outside, women inside" division of gender roles at home and workplace. Individuals who will be given an opportunity to practice flexible gender role in family and workplace, to promote gender equality in the society to increase the number of males in the traditional female-dominated field such as nursing, with more diversity in fields where nurses are males.

In conclusion, this study has confirmed an effect of video-based interventions conducted to enhance SWB of Taiwanese college students. In the future, regarding the effect of video-based interventions, participants should be able to choose their own favorite videos as PPIs to promote SWB. The video-based interventions can be extended to increase the circulation of the videos in the media and on the Internet for a long-lasting effect in the future. One major limitation of the current study was only by testing Taiwanese college

students, it was impossible to infer the results to people at other stages of development. It is suggested that future research adopts videos of diverse life styles to design PPIs as proposed by Positive Psychology to maximize the SWB of people at different stages of development and to enhance SWB of people of different genders. It is also suggested that evidence-based policies should be used in the future to ensure the SWB of people of different genders and to develop effective strategies to promote gender equality. As we can create a gender friendly environment to fulfill the needs of individuals of different genders based on gender characteristics, we will achieve the goal of sustainable human development.

## Competing Interests

The author declares that there is no competing interests regarding the publication of this article.

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