

PSIWORLD 2014

## Sleep, a predictor of subjective well-being

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### Abstract

Subjective well-being is not just a product of situational and dispositional factors, but is also based in part on underlying circadian rhythms.

A pilot study was conducted in order to examine subjective well-being components which are affected by sleep. Sleep parameters, mood, and cognitive and alertness satisfaction were assessed by participants, through self-monitoring over a period of 14 consecutive days.

We concluded that self-assessed resting level upon waking is a statistically significantly predictor of the mood which is affected by it to a greater extent than are cognitive and alertness skills, denoting the importance of sleep quality for daily well-being.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of PSIWORLD 2014.

Keywords: subjective well-being; life satisfaction; sleep; mood; cognition; alertness

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### 1. Introduction

In positive psychology, the technical term for happiness is subjective well-being. The concept was defined as a “person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life” (Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2002, p.63). “These evaluations include emotional reactions to events, as well as cognitive judgments of satisfaction and fulfillment” (Diener et al. 2002, p.63).

Diener (2000) illustrated that the concept has been refined: the cognitive component consists of life satisfaction (global judgments of one’s life) and satisfaction with specific life domains (e.g. work satisfaction), while the affect component (affect balance) refers to the emotions, moods and feelings a person has. The affect can be positive when people experience pleasant emotions as well as negative when the affect experience is causing discomfort.

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A circumplex model of affect was first developed by James Russell (1980), suggesting that emotions are distributed in a two-dimensional circular space, containing arousal (on the vertical axis) and valence dimensions (on the horizontal axis). The center of the circle represents a neutral valence and a medium level of arousal.

Sleep deprivation and its consequences is also a major topic in Psychology. Sleep researchers have found that good sleep sets up the brain for positive feelings. David Dinges experiments “showed conclusively that people who get less than a full night’s sleep feel significantly less happy, more stressed, more physically frail, and more mentally and physically exhausted as a result.” (Dement & Vaughan, 1999, p. 275).

Furthermore, a meta-analysis (Pilcher & Huffcutt, 1996) revealed that mood is affected more by sleep deprivation than are either cognitive skills or physical performance.

From a reverse perspective, in a recent study Ong et al. (2013) illustrated that relatively stable high levels of positive emotion may be conducive to improved sleep, while unstable highly positive feelings may be associated with poor sleep because such emotions are subject to the unpredictability of daily influences.

From a wider perspective, researchers have examined further the benefits of sleep, focusing either on methods of prevention, either on overcoming sleep deprivation outcomes. This led to a depth understanding of sleep cycles advantages. Mednick (2006) found that “generous allowance of Stage 2 plays a dominant role in increasing alertness” (p. 40) and “slow wave sleep has proven vital to the formation of declarative memory – new information consciously learned” (p. 41).

The following study examines further these phenomena, interrelating sleep quality and subjective well-being.

## 2. Methods

The research method applied was the correlational study. The subjects were integrated in a self-monitoring process, during which they accurately noted the parameters related to the nocturnal sleep and subjective well-being.

It was used a basic plan with two components of the independent variable, the sleep: average number of hours slept by night (ANHS) and average level of self-assessed resting upon waking (ALR)). The two components were measured on a daily basis, over a period of 14 consecutive days. ANHS was measured objectively, through an arithmetic calculus. Subjects monitored their bedtime (1), hypnagogic phase duration (2), night time awakenings (3) and waking time (4). ANHS was expressed in hours and minutes by this formula: (4)-(1)-(2)-(3).

ALR was measured subjectively, by self-assessing the resting level upon awaking.

For statistical processing it was used the period mean for both components.

### 2.1. Objective and hypotheses

The study is focused on determining possible correlations between the resting level and subjective well-being.

Hypothesis 1: The resting level is a significantly predictor of subjective well-being.

Hypothesis 2: The resting level correlates at a greater extent with the mood compared with cognitive and alertness satisfaction.

### 2.2. The research sample, the procedure and the instruments

The participants to this research project were selected based on sleep schedule (subjects without sleep disturbances) who volunteered to take part in the investigation. The subjects were presented with the plan of the research, receiving an instruction related to the self-monitoring program.

Before the monitoring period begun, the participants measured their current sleepiness level, and thereafter they were instructed to fill in the first questionnaire in the morning, upon waking, assessing parameters related to the nocturnal sleep.

The second questionnaire ought to be filled in by evening, apprising parameters related to subject’s mood and cognitive and alertness satisfaction along the day.

The sample consisted of 47 subjects, out of witch 42 agreed to be part in the study. However, 3 subjects were eliminated from the group on account of having an unstable sleep schedule (a pregnant woman, another one during

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