

Exercise walk-through

5.2

Positive Psychology

AP Psychology

What helps life go well?

Positive psychology

The field studies factors related to **well-being**, positive emotion and **resilience**. It complements the study of distress and disorder.

A positive outcome needs an identified measure and an appropriate research design.

A finding and the measurement behind it

Gratitude

Gratitude activities can support

subjective well-being .

Ask how well-being was measured and whether groups were compared.

Signature strengths

People using characteristic strengths report greater happiness and well-being. A self-report remains a subjective measure.

Reported association alone does not establish cause; an intervention requires its own evidence.

A strength in context

Original teaching example

A student uses a characteristic strength to help classmates understand a difficult idea. Ask which strength is being used and how any change in well-being would be measured; do not infer causation from one anecdote.

The CED groups strengths around wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. These are a framework, not six guaranteed routes to happiness.

Growth after adversity is not guaranteed

Posttraumatic growth

Positive psychological change may follow a struggle with trauma or stress. This does not mean trauma was beneficial, growth is inevitable or distress has disappeared.

Distinguish a possible outcome from a universal claim.

Research practice: complete study description

Fictional study — not a published experiment

Eighty adult volunteers consented to a seven-day writing study. Researchers randomly assigned them to gratitude reflections or neutral daily descriptions, ten minutes each day. Participants could withdraw; reports used codes.

Outcome: change in a 0–10 self-report well-being rating. The next page gives the fictional results.

Exercises 2.1·2.2

2.1 State what subjective well-being measures.

[2]

2.2 Explain hedonic adaptation and one consequence for policy or personal planning. [2]

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2.1

- life satisfaction plus the balance of positive to negative affect, by self-report

2.2 Explain hedonic adaptation and one consequence for policy or personal planning. [2]

2.2

- people adapt to improved circumstances so gains fade; so a one-off improvement raises well-being only temporarily

Exercise 2.3 (a)

2.3 A person's satisfaction falls after their neighbours' incomes rise, though their own is unchanged.

(a) Name the property of judgment involved.

[1]

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(a)

- relative comparison

Exercise 2.3 (b)

2.3 A person's satisfaction falls after their neighbours' incomes rise, though their own is unchanged.

(b) State what this shows about well-being measures.

[1]

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2.3 A person's satisfaction falls after their neighbours' incomes rise, though their own is unchanged.

(b) State what this shows about well-being measures. [1]

(b)

- reported well-being depends on the comparison group, not only on absolute conditions

Exercises 3.1-3.2

3.1 The relationship between income and well-being is

[1]

☐

A strong at all levels

B strong at low income and much weaker once needs are met

C absent

D negative

3.2 The main methodological weakness of subjective well-being measures is that they are

[1]

☐

A too long

B self-reported

C physiological

D unreliable across time

Exercises 3.1-3.2

3.1 The relationship between income and well-being is

[1]

☐

- A strong at all levels
- B strong at low income and much weaker once needs are met
- C absent
- D negative

3.1 B

- the association is strong at low income and weakens once basic needs are met

3.2 The main methodological weakness of subjective well-being measures is that they are

[1]

☐

- A too long
- B self-reported
- C physiological
- D unreliable across time

3.2 B

- the measure depends on what people report about themselves

Exercise 3.3 (a)

3.3 A government proposes to raise national well-being by increasing average income.

(a) State one limitation of the proposal.

[1]

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(a)

- hedonic adaptation and relative comparison mean average income gains may not raise well-being much

Exercise 3.3 (b)

3.3 A government proposes to raise national well-being by increasing average income.

(b) Suggest one alternative target and justify it.

[2]

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3.3 A government proposes to raise national well-being by increasing average income.

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(b)

- target social connection or autonomy at work, because these show reliable associations with well-being and are less subject to adaptation than income