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GLOBAL RESEARCH TRENDS IN SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND HAPPINESS: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS (2001–2024)

The study focuses on interpreting the evolution of the scientific discourse on subjective well-being and happiness within an increasingly complex social reality, where individuals' experienced quality of life becomes an indicator of sustainable development. The growth of publication activity and the expansion of interdisciplinary connections have created the need to systematize accumulated knowledge and identify major global trends.

The aim of the study was to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global publications on subjective well-being from 2001 to 2024, which made it possible to determine the developmental directions of theoretical and empirical research. The objectives included analysing publication dynamics, identifying leading countries, authors and journals, and reconstructing the conceptual structures of the field.

The scientific significance lies in the fact that the revealed trends clarify the theoretical foundations of studying subjective well-being and highlight gaps such as the underrepresentation of Central Asia in international scholarship. The methodology included bibliometric analysis of 496 Scopus-indexed articles using the Bibliometrix R package, enabling the construction of citation networks, thematic clusters and publication dynamics.

The findings demonstrate a steady increase in research interest and the dominance of studies originating from the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe. The conceptual structure comprises four core clusters: psychological mechanisms of well-being, socio-economic and health-related determinants, macroeconomic factors, and demographic-psychological aspects.

The practical significance is reflected in the potential use of the results for developing regional assessment tools and adapting international measurement methodologies to the socio-cultural context of Central Asia.

Keywords: subjective well-being, happiness, bibliometric analysis, research trends, Scopus database, global collaboration, conceptual framework.

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Субъективті әл-ауқат пен бақытқа қатысты жаһандық зерттеу үрдістері: билиометриялық талдау (2001–2024 ж.)

Зерттеу күрделене түсітін әлеуметтік шындық жағдайында субъективті әл-ауқат пен бақыт жөніндегі ғылыми дискурс эволюциясын түсіндіруге бағытталған, мұнда адамның сезінетін өмір сапасы тұрақты дамудың маңызды көрсеткішіне айналады. Ғылыми жарияланылардың артуы мен пәнаралық байланыстардың кеңеюі жинақталған білімді жүйелеуді және әлемдік ғылыми үрдістерді айқындауды қажет етті.

Зерттеудің мақсаты 2001–2024 жылдар аралығындағы субъективті әл-ауқат бойынша жаһандық жарияланымдарға кешенді библиометриялық талдау жүргізу болды, бұл теориялық және эмпирикалық зерттеулердің даму бағыттарын анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Міндеттер жарияланым динамикасын талдауды, жетекші елдер, авторлар мен журналдарды анықтауды және саланың концептуалдық құрылымдарын қалпына келтіруді қамтыды.

Жұмыстың ғылыми мәні субъективті әл-ауқатты зерделеудің теориялық негіздерін нақтылайтын және халықаралық әдебиетте Орталық Азия елдерінің жеткіліксіз қамтылуын көрсететін әлемдік үрдістерді айқындаумен сипатталады. Әдіснама Scopus базасында индекстелген 496 мағаланы Bibliometrix R бағдарламалық пакеті арқылы библиометриялық талдауды қамтыды, бұл дәйексөз беру желілерін, тақырыптық кластерлерді және жарияланым динамикасын картага түсіруге мүмкіндік берді.

Нәтижелер ғылыми қызығушылықтың тұрақты өскенін және АҚШ, Ұлыбритания мен Батыс Еуропа зерттеулерінің басым екенін көрсетті. Концептуалдық құрылым төрт негізгі кластерді біріктіреді: әл-ауқаттың психологиялық механизмдері, әлеуметтік-экономикалық және денсаулық факторлары, макроэкономикалық детерминанттар және демографиялық-психологиялық, аспектілер.

Практикалық маңыздылығы зерттеу қорытындыларының аймақтық бағалау құралдарын өзірлеуде және халықаралық әдістемелерді Орталық Азияның әлеуметтік-мәдени ерекшеліктеріне бейімдеуде қолданылу мүмкіндігімен айқындалады.

Түйін сөздер: субъективті әл-ауқат, бақыт, библиометриялық талдау, зерттеу үрдістері, Scopus дерекқоры, жаһандық ынтымақтастық, концептуалдық құрылым.

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Глобальные тенденции исследований субъективного благополучия и счастья: библиометрический анализ (2001–2024 гг.)

Исследование направлено на осмысление эволюции научного дискурса о субъективном благополучии и счастье в условиях усложняющейся социальной реальности, где переживаемое качество жизни становится индикатором устойчивого развития. Рост публикационной активности и расширение междисциплинарных связей сформировали необходимость систематизировать накопленные знания и выделить ведущие мировые тенденции.

Цель исследования заключалась в проведении комплексного библиометрического анализа глобального массива публикаций по субъективному благополучию за 2001–2024 гг., что позволило определить направления развития теоретических и эмпирических исследований. Задачи включали анализ динамики публикаций, определение ключевых стран, авторов и журналов, а также реконструкцию концептуальных структур области.

Научная значимость работы определяется тем, что выявленные тенденции уточняют теоретические основания изучения субъективного благополучия и фиксируют пробелы, включая недостаточную представленность Центральной Азии в международной литературе. Методология включала библиометрический анализ 496 статей, индексированных в Scopus, с использованием пакета Bibliometrix R, что позволило построить карты цитирования, тематических кластеров и публикационной динамики.

Результаты показывают устойчивый рост научного интереса и доминирование исследований США, Великобритании и Западной Европы. Концептуальная структура включает четыре ключевых кластера: психологические механизмы благополучия, социально-экономические и здравоохранительные факторы, макроэкономические детерминанты и демографико-психологические аспекты.

Практическая значимость связана с тем, что выводы исследования могут быть использованы при разработке региональных инструментов оценки благополучия и адаптации международных методик к социально-культурным особенностям Центральной Азии.

Ключевые слова: субъективное благополучие, счастье, библиометрический анализ, тенденции исследований, база данных Scopus, глобальное сотрудничество, концептуальная основа.

Introduction

Current socio-economic and cultural transformations have led to an increase in scientific interest in the issue of subjective well-being of the individual. In the context of globalization, digitalization and increasing social inequality, the issues of quality of life, psychological well-being and social satisfaction are becoming increasingly important not only for the individual, but also for society as a whole. Subjective well-being is now considered not only an indicator of personal satisfaction and mental health, but also one of the main factors of sustainable development, social capital and the competitiveness of states. In recent decades, subjective well-being (SWB) and happiness have moved from indirect concepts in psychology, sociology and philosophy to central topics of human development and policy effectiveness. As a result, increasing empirical evidence shows that economic prosperity alone is not enough to ensure the progress of society, which is causing a paradigm shift from “wealth-oriented” governance to “well-being-oriented” governance (Diener & Tov, 2012). Institutions such as the United Nations, OECD, and World Health Organization have brought SWB to the forefront of global debate. Through initiatives such as the World Happiness Report, the OECD Quality of Life Index, and the WHO Quality of Life Program, well-being is recognized as a multidimensional construct that integrates optimal mental health, social trust, environmental quality, and personal autonomy (Stone & Krueger, 2018; Corlățean, 2019).

The global institutionalization of well-being indicators is in line with contemporary societal challenges that affect life satisfaction and social cohesion, particularly digitalization, inequality, and mental health crises. Research suggests that innovation and sustainable development can mitigate the negative impacts of globalization and environmental pressures on happiness, highlighting the need for inclusive and sustainable well-being policies (Wang et al., 2023). As countries integrate SWB into official statistics and policy design, well-being is emerging not only as an individual psychological outcome but also as a comprehensive measure of collective progress and social stability (Oishi, 2019; Antipina et al., 2025).

As mentioned above, international organizations such as the World Health Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the United Nations are actively introducing subjective well-being indicators into their quality of life monitoring systems. This confirms the strate-

gic importance of this research area. However, the fragmentation of views in the scientific literature, the lack of a single conceptual model, and differences in measurement methodologies persist, which makes it difficult to form a holistic understanding of the dynamics and structure of subjective well-being (Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018; Luhmann, 2021;). In such a situation, conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scientific publications allows us to identify key research areas, identify the core of the most productive journals and authors, as well as track thematic evolution and interdisciplinary connections (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et. Al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Such an approach not only systematizes the accumulated knowledge, but also allows us to identify research gaps. This makes the study both theoretically and practically relevant. Therefore, in this study, a bibliometric analysis of published scientific articles on the topic of subjective well-being and happiness levels was conducted. The analysis was carried out by searching for indexed publications in the Scopus database using specific keywords.

Despite the rapid expansion of research on subjective well-being and happiness since the early 2000s, the field remains theoretically fragmented and methodologically inconsistent. Existing research uses a variety of theoretical approaches that integrate individual psychological, economic, and social perspectives rather than relying on a single conceptual model (Huong, 2023). While early studies focused largely on individual psychological characteristics, later work has begun to encompass a broader range of socio-economic factors, such as globalization, governance, and sustainable development, which in turn has increased the heterogeneity of conceptual orientations (Cataldo et al., 2024). In addition, empirical research faces challenges related to measurement validity, cultural bias, and cross-national comparability, as global indices often reflect Western-centric assumptions about life satisfaction and happiness (Pavot, 2013; Ye et al., 2014). Geographical differences further exacerbate these problems: while research from the US, UK, and Western Europe is dominant, the contribution from Central and South Asia is significantly lower (Dominko & Verbić, 2018; Stavrova, 2019). This imbalance limits the ability to fully capture the diverse understandings of the field in its cultural and social contexts. Therefore, systematic bibliometric analysis is needed to consolidate scattered knowledge, track thematic and geographical evolution, and guide future theoretical integration and policy-oriented research.

In this regard, the main goal of the study is to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global scientific publications on subjective well-being and happiness. This analysis is aimed at identifying leading authors, journals, thematic areas and the conceptual evolution of this research area within the social sciences and psychology. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were set:

1. Collect and systematize publications indexed in the Scopus database using the keywords “happiness level” and “subjective well-being” for the period 2001–2024;
2. Assess the dynamics of publications and citations, author productivity and journal impact;
3. Identify the most influential authors, articles and journals through co-citation and co-authorship analysis;
4. Analyze the geographical distribution of research activity and international collaboration networks;
5. Map the thematic and conceptual structure of research on well-being through clustering and keyword association;
6. Identify the main theoretical approaches and new directions in recent years (health, socio-economic, psychological and macroeconomic factors);
7. Identify existing research gaps and provide recommendations for future interdisciplinary and regionally inclusive research, with a particular emphasis on increasing the scientific contribution of Central Asian countries.

The study of subjective well-being and happiness has both theoretical depth and real-world relevance, reflecting a growing global consensus that human progress goes beyond economic indicators. International organizations such as the OECD, WHO, and the UN are increasingly integrating happiness and well-being indicators into governance and sustainable development frameworks. Examples include the OECD Good Life Index, the WHO Quality of Life Program, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Pereira et al., 2024). These initiatives emphasize the role of well-being as a scientific construct and a policy tool capable of informing mental health strategies, social equity programs, and national development agendas. The global proliferation of well-being research across psychology, economics, and social policy further demonstrates its interdisciplinary and applied importance (Fabian, 2018).

In this context, this bibliometric analysis serves as an important scientific tool for synthesizing scattered knowledge, mapping intellectual structures,

and uncovering emerging interdisciplinary connections. By identifying influential authors, research clusters, and geographic trends, bibliometric studies cumulatively improve our understanding of SWB’s conceptual evolution and policy relevance (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Cataldo et al., 2024). In practice, such systematization provides an empirical basis for developing well-being-oriented policies, especially in underserved regions such as Central Asia, where comprehensive and culturally sensitive approaches to happiness research remain limited. This study therefore supports not only an academic understanding of the global landscape of SWB, but also the design of evidence-based policies aimed at increasing public well-being and life satisfaction worldwide.

Literature review

The early XXI century saw a profound shift in the scientific study of the concepts of “happiness” and “subjective well-being,” from a philosophically abstract notion to a robust empirical field. After 2000, along with the rise of the positive psychology movement led by scholars such as Seligman, the expansion of “happiness research” reimagined happiness as a psychological construct that could be measured and improved (Seligman & Peterson, 2005). The paradigm shift catalyzed interdisciplinary research linking affective science, behavioral economics, and social policy, and grounding happiness and SWB in measurable life domains such as health, income, and social connectedness (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2011). The early 2000s witnessed a shift from purely moral and philosophical theories, such as the “greatest happiness” principle of utilitarianism, to evidence-based models that conceptualize happiness as an interaction between cognitive appraisals and emotional states (Stutzer, 2008). This shift has established happiness and socio-economic development as key empirical indicators of the happiness and socio-economic research framework (Drakopoulos, 2023).

Another interesting aspect of happiness research is cross-cultural research. In this perspective, happiness is not a universal construct, but rather is constructed from cultural systems of meaning, emotion, and morality. In individualistic societies, happiness is typically conceptualized as personal satisfaction, positive emotion, and the pursuit of self-actualization. Western cultures focus on psychological processes of autonomy and achievement (Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004). In contrast, collectivist cultures, particularly in East Asia, as-

sociate happiness with social harmony, relationship balance, and moral virtue, emphasizing the regulation of emotion to maintain social cohesion (Lu & Gilmour, 2004). Cultural display rules and norms of modesty shape emotional displays and self-assessments of happiness. Individuals in Eastern collectivist contexts have also been found to often downplay positive affect in order to conform to social expectations of humility and restraint (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2015). These diverse emotional and moral conceptions of happiness make it difficult to conduct research through global and universal comparisons, as standardized metrics are considered Western, which may favor affect-based models. It is therefore clear that cultural diversity challenges the assumption of universality in measuring happiness, and therefore needs to be conceptualized within culturally sensitive frameworks that take into account the different emotional norms, evaluative standards, and moral ideals that underlie well-being across societies (Joshanloo, 2014).

Overall, bibliometric studies conducted to date on happiness and subjective well-being provide valuable information. However, most of them are limited in scope and multidimensionality and are not sufficiently interconnected. Analyses on happiness often focus on clusters of topics related to publication dynamics, authorship collaboration, and positive psychology. However, they tend to cover a short time span or use small data sets (Cobo et al., 2011; Dhanda, 2020). Bibliometric studies focused on SWB, on the other hand, focus more on policy and institutional measurement systems. Therefore, these studies are limited to analyzing indicators from organizations such as the OECD and the UN (Silva, Nunes, & Ribeiro, 2022). Common limitations that are common to many studies can be mentioned. Some use narrow keywords, there is little coverage of non-Western studies, and the similarities between happiness and SWB are not fully explored. Methods that examine long-term thematic evolution are also rarely used. This study fills these gaps. It analyses happiness and SWB together, covering a long period from 2001–2024. It also uses advanced visualization techniques and focuses on global diffusion and regional inequalities, particularly the understudied Central Asia.

Materials and methods

Data collection

Data for this bibliometric analysis were extracted from the Scopus database using a structured

search protocol proposed by the authors, based on the methodology introduced by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017) using the Bibliometrix R package. The search was limited to the subject areas of social sciences and psychology, written in English, and published as journal articles in the last period between 2001 and 2024, containing the keywords “happiness level” and “subjective well-being” in the titles, abstracts, or keywords. The initial search yielded 1469 documents, which were then filtered using automated Scopus criteria, resulting in 545 entries. After manual screening to remove irrelevant and duplicate items such as monographs, book chapters, reports, and conference proceedings, the final dataset consisted of 496 peer-reviewed journal articles. The results showed a steady increase in the number of publications and citations over the past 24 years, from only 2 articles in 2001 to 49 articles in 2024, reflecting increasing academic institutionalization and the expansion of subjective well-being research worldwide.

Methodology

This study used a comprehensive bibliometric approach to analyze global research trends on subjective well-being and happiness. Data were retrieved from the Scopus database using a structured Boolean search query combining the keywords “happiness level” and “subjective well-being”. The search was limited to journal articles published in English, published between 2001 and 2024, and in the social sciences and psychology. According to the PRISMA protocol, 1,469 records were initially identified, and after applying automated and manual filters, 496 articles were selected for analysis. The dataset was processed and visualized in RStudio using the Bibliometrix R-package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Quantitative indicators were assessed based on the dynamics of publications and citations, and author productivity was calculated based on Lotka’s law. Double citations, co-authorship, and international collaboration networks were identified, and leading authors and journals were identified. Finally, through thematic and cluster analysis methods, the conceptual structure of the scientific field was depicted and four main research directions were identified that link the socio-economic, psychological, and demographic dimensions of well-being.

Results and discussion

This method was introduced into scientific analysis by Aria and Cuccurullo [2017] in 2017. The selected articles were analyzed and visual-

ized using the R Studio tool in the Bibliometrix package. This method allows us to identify the structure of the scientific space, high-performance authors and publications, key topics and trends in the development of research questions.

The following steps were carried out during the analysis: a) citation and performance analysis; b) scientific communication; c) analysis of double citations; c) division of the research topic into cluster groups.

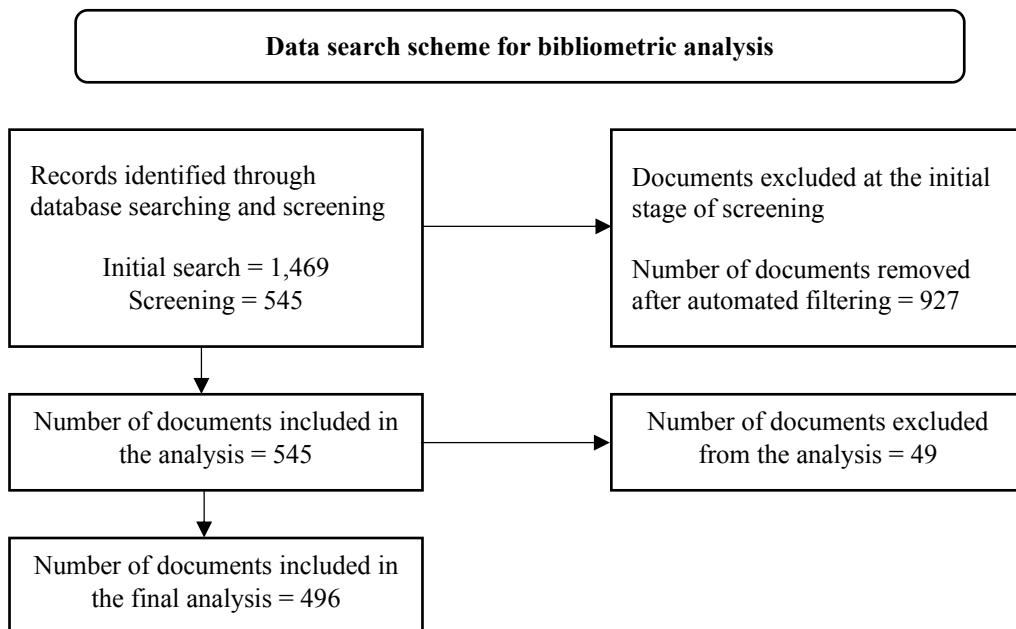


Figure 1 – Scheme of selection and analysis of scientific articles according to the “PRISMA protocol”

The actual selection algorithm was implemented according to the following formula: “(TITLE-ABS-KEY (happiness AND level) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (subjective AND well-being)) AND PUBYEAR > 2001 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “SOCI”) OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “PSYC”) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACT-KEYWORD , “Happiness”) OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , “Subjective Well-being”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, “final”)).

As a result, a total of 545 publications were selected by filtering articles published in English between 2001 and 2024 (see Figure 1 for details). To ensure the validity of the study, monographs, book chapters, reports, and conference papers were excluded. The terms “happiness level” and “subjective well-being” were selected as keywords. From the general scientific fields, the fields of “social sciences” and “Psychology” were selected. During the

initial stage of database search and data selection, 1469 articles were identified within the scope of the research topic, of which 927 articles were excluded from the list using automated filters of the Scopus database. During the next stage of the study, 49 articles were removed from the analysis database, resulting in 496 articles selected.

The results of the analysis show that over the past twenty-four years there has been a steady positive trend in terms of both the number of publications and their citations. This indicates a growing scientific interest in the issue under study. The data for 2001–2024 show a clear increase in publication dynamics, i.e. the annual output has steadily increased from 2 articles in 2001 to 49 articles in 2024, i.e. the industry has gone through a period of institutionalization and expansion. However, the average citation per article (MeanTCperArt) was very high in the initial years of the study period, and since 2018 has been systematically decreasing, showing the lowest figure in 2022–2024.

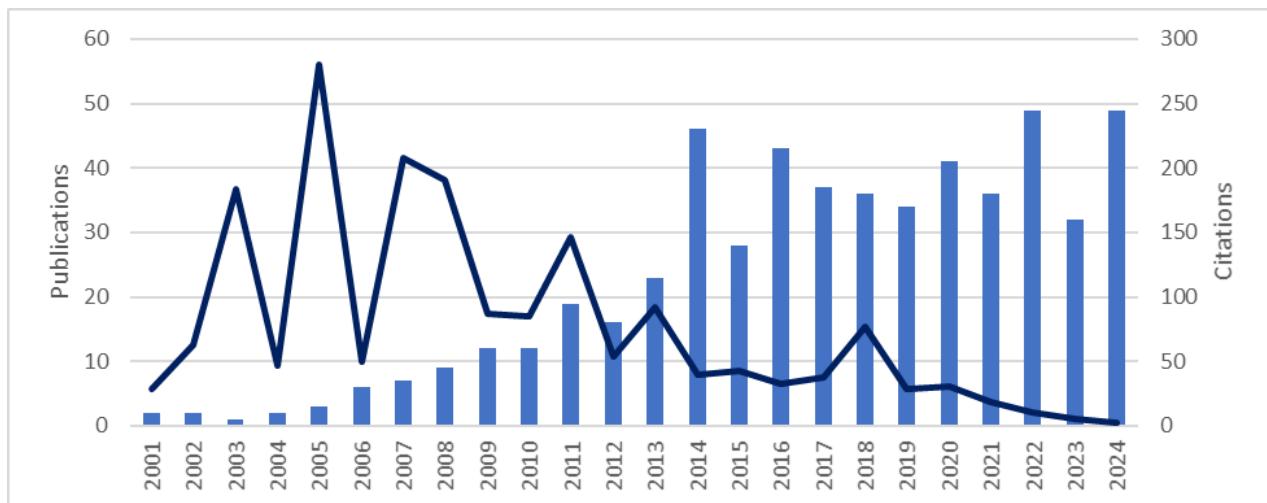


Figure 2 – Number of articles published and average citations from 2001 to 2024

The next stage of the analysis was to identify the most cited popular articles in the study of “happiness level” or “subjective well-being” (SWB) (Table 1). The majority of the list is composed of articles authored by Diener Ef, Tay L, Oishi S, Lucas Re (10 out of 13 articles were written by these authors), which indicates that this group of authors has created the theoretical and empirical core of the study of subjective well-being over the past two decades. The most influential work to date in assessing the level of global happiness is the article “Advances in subjective well-being research” by Diener, Tay, Oishi (2018, *Nature Human Behaviour*). The total number of citations to the article is =1115, and the average annual citation rate is ≈ 139 . At the same time, the thematic focus during the study period included two clusters: (1) adaptation and set-point theory (Lucas, 2006–2007; marriage, long-term disability, stability of life satisfaction), (2) socio-economic determinants (income, inequality, debt, progressive taxation, national satisfaction).

A report prepared by the Biblioshiny program calculated the frequency of publications written on the subjective well-being of authors according to the

law of “Lotka’s law”, and found that 90% (1089) of the 1208 authors published at least one article. While 0.07% (85) wrote two articles, 0.01% published a total of 3 works (17) and 1 author published a maximum of 11 articles.

The cumulative number of publications on the research topic is presented in Figure 3. As we noted in the analysis, scientific production in the field of happiness research has been steadily increasing between 2001 and 2024, with the *Journal of Happiness Studies* being the industry leader. The following high-level publications are included in the list of high-yielding journals: *Social Indicators Research*, *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, and *Frontiers in Psychology Personality and Individual Differences*.

One of the journals with a particularly strong scientific impact on the topic of subjective well-being is the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, as the 6 articles published in the journal received an average of 218 citations, while a single review article in *Nature Human Behaviour* received 1,115 citations. The leading journals in terms of the number of articles are the *Journal of Happiness Studies* and *Social Indicators Research* (Table 2).

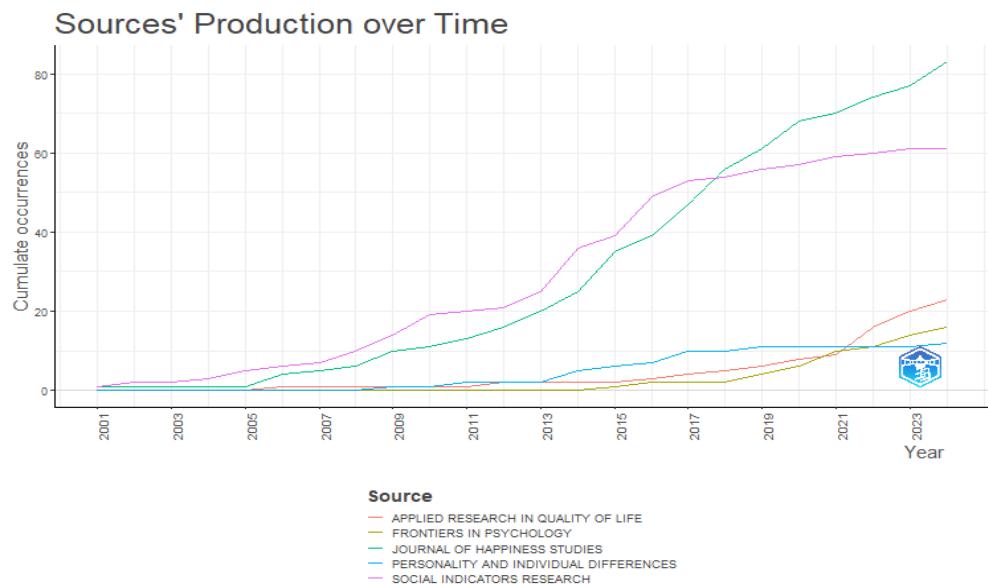


Figure 3 – Dynamics of productivity of scientific publications

Table 1 – List of most cited articles in the study of SWB

No	Authors	Year	Title of the article	Publication	Citation count (TC)	Citation count per year (TCpY)
1	Diener Ef, Tay L & Oishi S	2018	Advances in subjective well-being research	Nature Human Behaviour	1115	139,375
2	Lucas Re	2007	Adaptation and the set-point model of Subjective Well-Being: does happiness change after major life events?	Current Directions in Psychological Science	593	31,21052632
3	Diener Ef, Tay L	2011	The religion paradox: if religion makes people happy, why are so many dropping out?	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	453	30,2
4	Lucas Re	2007	Long-term disability is associated with lasting changes in subjective well-being: evidence from two nationally representative longitudinal studies	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	320	16,84210526
5	Diener Ef, Tay L & Oishi S	2013	Rising income and the subjective well-being of nations	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	307	23,61538462
6	Lucas, R. E., & Donnellan, M. B.	2007	How stable is happiness? Using the starts model to estimate the stability of life satisfaction	Journal of Research in Personality	224	11,78947368
7	Diener Ef, Tay L	2015	Subjective well-being and human welfare around the world as reflected in the Gallup world poll	International Journal of Psychology	148	13,45454545
8	Evans Mdr, Kelley J	2014	Does national income inequality affect individuals' quality of life in Europe? Inequality, happiness, finances, and health	Social Indicators Research	134	11,16666667

Continuation of the table

Nº	Authors	Year	Title of the article	Publication	Citation count (TC)	Citation count per year (TCpY)
9	Tay L	2017	Debt and subjective well-being: the other side of the income-happiness coin	Journal of Happiness Studies	118	13,11111111
10	Diener Ef, Oishi S	2012	Progressive taxation and the subjective well-being of nations	Psychological Science	113	8,071428571
11	Kelley J, Evans Mdr	2017	Societal inequality and individual subjective well-being: results from 68 societies and over 200,000 individuals, 1981–2008	Social Science Research	105	11,66666667
12	Diener Ef, Tay L	2011	Subjective well-being and national satisfaction: findings from a worldwide survey	Psychological Science	102	6,8
13	Lucas Re	2006	Do people really adapt to marriage?	Journal Of Happiness Studies	102	5,1

Table 2 – Productivity of scientific publications in leading journals in the study of SWB

Publications	Citation count (TC)	Number of articles(NP)	Average number of citations
JOURNAL OF HAPPINESS STUDIES	3807	83	46
SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH	3597	61	59
JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY	1310	6	218
NATURE HUMAN BEHAVIOUR	1115	1	1115
JOURNAL OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY	684	9	76
CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE	593	1	593
SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MEDICINE	524	8	65,5
PERSONALITY AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES	522	12	43,5
ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH	471	1	471
JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC PSYCHOLOGY	450	6	75

During the bibliometric analysis, it is possible to identify a map of countries that have studied subjective well-being the most. As shown in Figure 4, the country with the highest concentration of scientists and scientific institutions that have analyzed the level of happiness is the USA (301), followed by China and Western European countries, and among the Central Asian countries, only Kazakhstani authors (4) have published articles in indexed scientific journals in this area. The intensity of the colors on the map indicates the frequency of publication (from low to high as shown in the figure), and there are no data/publications for countries marked in gray. As this publication map shows, Central Asian countries are at an early stage in conducting research on sub-

jective well-being and happiness. While Kazakhstan shows a low publication frequency on the publication map, it can be seen that other Central Asian countries have no data/publications yet.

The analysis of publication production and geography of influence revealed asymmetric data. For example, the USA is the leader in both metrics (NP=99, TC=8280, average citations – 83.6), while the PRC is in 2nd place in terms of the number of scientific articles (NP=59), but ranks low in terms of average citations (19.5). The works of scientific institutions in Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Australia, and Spain are cited in the average citations range of -55–80 on average and are also among the top ten in terms of productivity.

Country Scientific Production

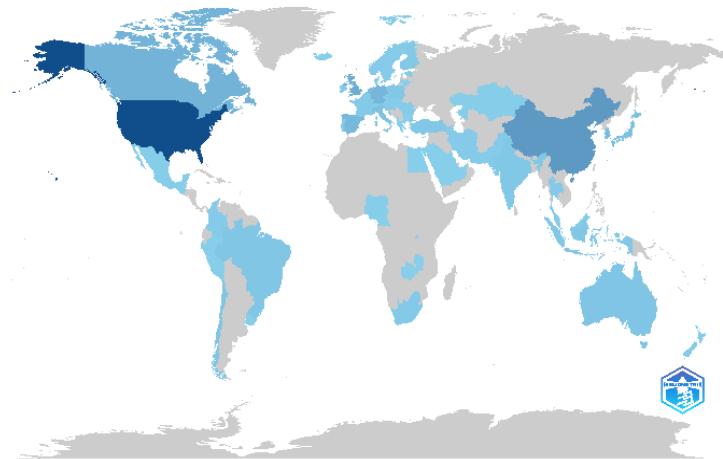


Figure 4 – Cross-country analysis of scientific productivity by author affiliation

Table 3 – Interstate share of scientific productivity

Analysis of citation level					Analysis of Articles		
Nº	Country	Citation count (TC)	Number of articles (NP)	Average citations per Article	Nº	Country	Number of Articles (NP)
1	USA	8280	99	83,6	1	USA	99
2	Germany	2237	31	69,9	2	China	59
3	United Kingdom	2236	28	79,9	3	Germany	32
4	Canada	1520	31	49	4	Canada	31
5	Netherlands	1337	19	70,4	5	United Kingdom	28
6	Australia	1231	18	68,4	6	Spain	21
7	Spain	1167	21	55,6	7	Korea	19
8	China	1151	59	19,5	8	Netherlands	19
9	Korea	412	19	21,7	9	Australia	18
10	HONG KONG	365	10	36,5	10	Italy	17

As the map of scientific cooperation between countries shows, the main center of international publication activity in the field of research is the USA. This country has established extensive thematic cooperation with leading scientific centers such as the UK, Germany, China, Korea and Australia. Western European countries (UK, Germany, France, Netherlands) are closely interconnected and, together with the USA, form the main core of the global scientific network. Asian countries (China, Japan, South Korea, India) are also actively involved in international scientific cooperation, conducting joint research, in particular, with the USA

and Europe. As shown in the map, it is revealed that Kazakhstani and other Central Asian states' scientific institutions do not have connections with other countries, which indicates an insufficient level of international scientific integration of the region.

As a result of the conceptual structural analysis conducted on the basis of the selected data, four major thematic clusters were identified. Each cluster describes a specific research direction and reflects the structural features of the scientific field:

(1) Blue cluster (Socioeconomic and health factors). This cluster includes concepts such as *socio-economic factors, health, health status, psychom-*

etry, questionnaires, very elderly, 80 and over. It includes works aimed at studying the socio-economic and health aspects of subjective well-being. Here, we can mention the work of Lucas (Lucas, 2007. *Long-term disability...*), where the author analyzes the impact of long-term disability/health status on subjective well-being and identifies a high correlation between health and happiness. The main scientific focus in the cluster is on the health status of different age groups of the population, measuring quality of life using psychometric methods, as well as using survey methods.

(2) Green cluster (Psychological and social aspects). The cluster is focused on key words that reflect the personal and socio-psychological processes of subjective well-being, such as terms such as *personal satisfaction, cross-sectional study, longitudinal study, social support, emotions, aging, adolescent, stress, social psychology*. As central works here, we can consider R. Lucas's research on the "set-point" model and the analysis of adaptation to major life events (Lucas, 2007. *Adaptation and the set-point model...*) and the works devoted to proving the stability of happiness (Lucas, 2007. *How stable is happiness?*). In addition, an article on the analysis of marriage as a life event and the dynamics of adaptation to it (Lucas, 2006. *Do people really adapt to marriage?*) can be included in this cluster. In addition, Diener & Tay, analyzing the "paradox of religion," identified a relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being (Diener & Tay, 2011. *The religion paradox...*). In general, this cluster suggests that variations in subjective well-being are explained not only by external circumstances, but also by internal adaptation mechanisms, value orientations, and social roles.

(3) Red cluster (Economic policy and institutional factors). This cluster includes concepts such as *gross domestic product, economic growth, income distribution, unemployment, poverty, socio-economic indicators, employment, quality of life*. Thus, the cluster combines studies that consider subjective well-being as a function of macro-level conditions. At the country level, the relationship between income growth and well-being has been confirmed (Diener, Tay, & Oishi, 2013. *Rising income...*), the role of progressive taxation is clarified (Diener & Oishi, 2012. *Progressive taxation...*), and the impact of national inequality on quality of life has been recorded (Evans & Kelley, 2014. *Income inequality...*). National studies conducted on large samples show that social inequality systematically reduces the well-being of an individual (Kelley

& Evans, 2017. *Societal inequality...*) and global surveys (Gallup) provide a comparative picture of well-being and well-being in different institutional contexts (Diener & Tay, 2015. *Human welfare...*; Diener & Tay, 2011. *National satisfaction...*). Thus, the cluster describes the structural framework within which the psychological mechanisms of the previous clusters "operate".

(4) Purple cluster (Psychological well-being and demographics). This cluster includes concepts such as *psychological well-being, emotional well-being, anxiety, depression, sadness, happiness, life satisfaction, gender, household income, education, demography*. It describes research based on individual and demographic factors. The main topics are psychological well-being, emotional state, gender differences, education and the impact of income level on satisfaction. Research on the burden of debt reveals the "other side" of the "income-happiness" relationship, showing that debt as a chronic stressor reduces well-being even with relative income (Tay, 2017. *Debt and subjective well-being...*). In the context of these results, work on the dynamics of happiness with changes in marital status – marriage and adaptation to it – is of great importance, showing how demographic transitions change psychological conditions, strengthen or weaken the influence of economic factors (Lucas, 2006. *Do people really adapt to marriage?*). This cluster emphasizes the "micro-level" nature of changes in well-being: the financial and family contours of everyday life translate directly into emotional and cognitive appraisals.

The results of the cluster analysis, together with the conceptual structural map, reveal the multilayered character of subjective well-being. The findings also offer an explanation for the theoretical fragmentation that is evident in the extant literature. Owing to the absence of a unified conceptual framework, previous studies have typically engaged only one of the psychological, economic, or sociological perspectives and thus have provided a constrained interpretation of subjective well-being (Huong, 2023). While psychological and social mechanisms (the green cluster) delineate the core dynamics of happiness evaluation through adaptation to life events, values, and social roles, their effects are conditioned by an individual's health status and everyday socioeconomic circumstances (the blue cluster), which set the upper and lower bounds of potential adaptation. These micro-level processes unfold within macroeconomic and institutional structures (the red cluster) – such as levels of economic development, inequality, taxation, and social policy – that

shape the average levels and distributions of well-being across social groups and countries. As highlighted by Cataldo et al. (2024), although the scope of research has progressively expanded to incorpo-

rate macro-social factors including globalization, governance quality, and sustainable development, the heterogeneity of these approaches underscores the weakness of conceptual integration.

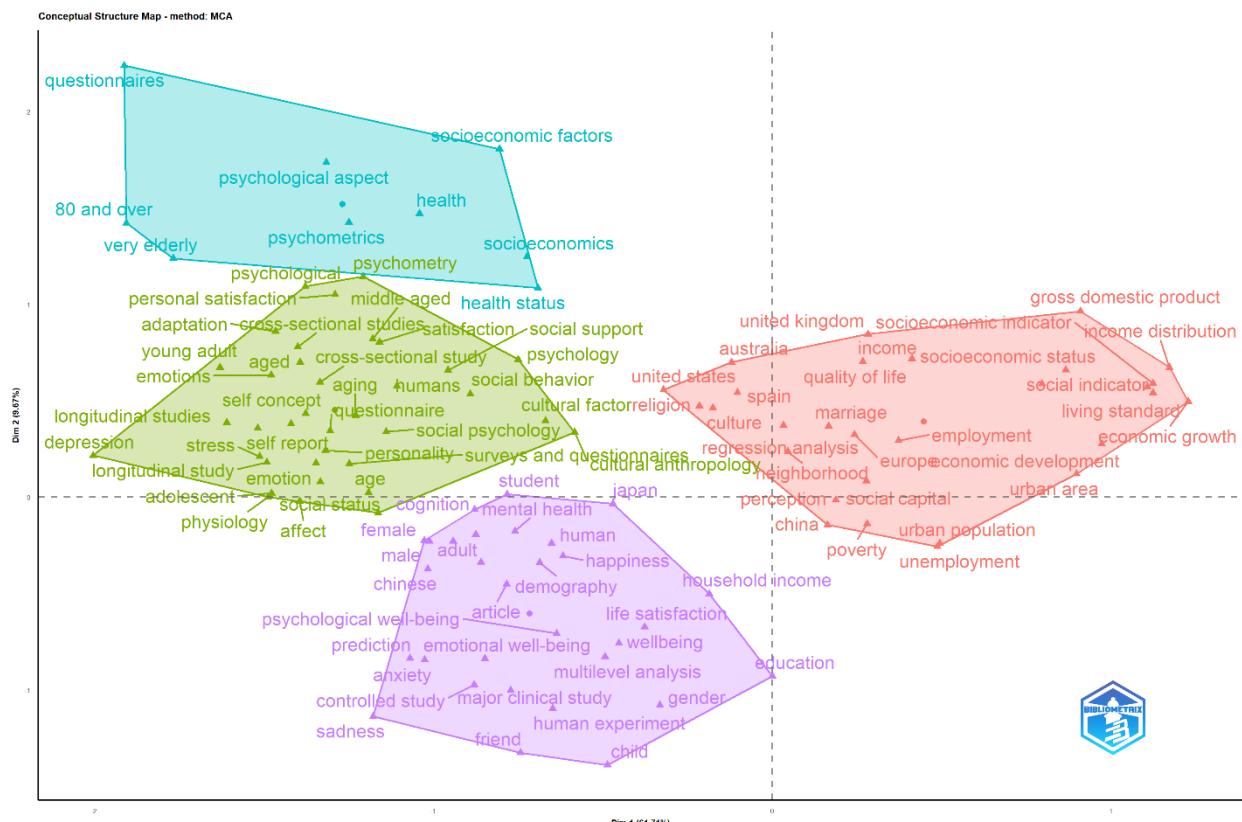


Figure 5 – Cluster analysis of scientific articles

Consequently, household and demographic life characteristics (the purple cluster) – including marital status, education, income, and debt burden – translate structural conditions and psychological mechanisms into concrete, day-to-day assessments of life satisfaction and emotional states. Subjective well-being thus emerges as an outcome of interactions among micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors, and the identified clusters form a coherent analytical framework linking individual evaluations with health status, household resources, and the institutional features of national contexts.

Nevertheless, empirical research continues to face persistent challenges related to measurement validity, cultural adaptability, and cross-national comparability. Many global indices reflect value orientations rooted in Western conceptions of

happiness and life satisfaction, which limits their universal applicability (Pavot, 2013; Ye et al., 2014). Geographic disparities further intensify this issue: although most studies are conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe, regions such as Central and South Asia remain significantly underrepresented in the scholarly literature (Dominko & Verbić, 2018; Stavrova, 2019).

From this standpoint, our study proposes an integrated analytical model that systematically examines the multilevel nature of subjective well-being, enabling the synthesis of diverse theoretical perspectives while accounting for cultural and geographic heterogeneity. This model offers a novel methodological orientation for advancing the theoretical and empirical study of subjective well-being.

Conclusion

The results of the bibliometric analysis showed that subjective well-being is not dependent on a single factor, but is formed at the intersection of interconnected factors (personal psychological mechanisms, health/household resources, institutional and economic environment). The cluster map also revealed that these levels complement each other, that is, psychological adaptation processes are based on resource constraints, and the macrostructural context systematically displaces individual values. As a practical conclusion, we conclude that policies aimed at increasing well-being should be comprehensive and, in addition to income and employment, should simultaneously reduce inequality, manage debt burden, strengthen mental health and social support. In the academic environment, multilevel, longitudinal designs that combine micro and macro variables in one model are important in studying happiness and subjective well-being, and it is nec-

essary to compare Kazakhstani data at the global level by expanding international co-authorship. In addition, given that the study of this topic in Central Asian countries is at an early stage, it is recommended that the authors from the CA states actively participate in international collaborative scientific environments and networks in order to increase citations and integration, develop studies that take into account local cultural and social factors in the context of SWB, and develop national and regional SWB and happiness measurement tools and metrics that take into account the specifics of local societies without directly copying Western models.

Алғыс

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