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A SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF RYFF'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING SCALE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL VALIDITY AS WELL AS SPIRITUAL VALUES

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas skala *psychological well-being* (PWB) Ryff dan melihat masalah dalam membuatnya valid dan reliabel untuk berbagai budaya dan kelompok. Ini juga menjelaskan bagaimana skala PWB Ryff telah berubah seiring waktu dan memberikan ide untuk apa yang harus dilakukan dalam publikasi mendatang. Metode yang digunakan adalah *systematic literature review* (SLR), di mana artikel ditemukan, diperiksa, dan dipelajari secara kritis. Di antara 429 artikel, hanya 29 yang memenuhi kriteria dan digunakan untuk pemeriksaan lebih lanjut. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa skala 120 item asli valid dan reliabel, tetapi terlalu panjang untuk digunakan dengan mudah. Versi yang lebih pendek dengan 18 item tidak memiliki validitas yang cukup baik. Beberapa penelitian juga mengatakan model enam faktor dalam skala Ryff tidak cocok dengan data dan model baru disarankan sebagai gantinya. Penelitian ini menegaskan ada kebutuhan untuk memeriksa pemeriksaan di lebih banyak budaya, membuat item yang lebih baik, dan memikirkan teori-teori baru. Penelitian ini juga mengonfirmasi model enam faktor dapat bekerja dengan baik dengan nilai-nilai Islam yang ditambahkan ke dalamnya.

Keywords: further research; psychological well-being ryff scale; psychometry analysis; systematic review

Abstract

This research aimed to discuss Ryff's psychological well-being (PWB) scale and looked at problems with making it valid and reliable for different cultures and groups. It also explains how Ryff's PWB scale has changed over time and gave ideas for what to do in future publications. The method used was a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), where articles were found, examined, and studied critically. Among 429 articles, only 29 met the criteria and were used for further checking. The results showed that the original 120-item scale was valid and reliable, but it was too long to use easily. A shorter version with 18 items did not have good enough validity. Some studies also said the six-factor model in Ryff's scale did not match the data, and new models were suggested instead. This research confirmed there was a need to check the examination across more cultures, make better items, and think about new theories. It also said the six-factor model could work well with Islamic values added to it.

Keywords: further research; psychological well-being ryff scale; psychometry analysis; systematic review

INTRODUCTION

The definition of well-being is a dynamic subject that has been discussed among various academics where Ryff criticized the traditional definition of well-being focusing on happiness and life satisfaction. Therefore, Psychological Well-Being (PWB) is defined by Ryff through theoretical integration including positive psychology, life development, and health drawn from a broad review of theoretical literature (Ryff, 1989). PWB is a state where individuals can achieve happiness by achieving self-actualization or becoming full-functioning individuals (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Ryff further proposed a six-factor model which included purpose in life (PL), autonomy (A), personal growth (PG), environmental mastery (EM), positive relations with others (PR), and self-acceptance (SA) (Ryff, 2015).

The theory of well-being has also been criticized by several scholars in the development based on several perspectives, namely Eastern culture, philosophy, and Islam. In this context, Joshanloo (2014) criticized the Western theory of well-being based on Eastern culture which needed to accommodate local cultural values, such as not being selfish as well as accommodating feelings of unhappiness. Correlating with this criticism, Friedrich Nietzsche stated that accepting the contradiction of feelings or suffering in life was necessary to achieve true happiness and not only life satisfaction as well as virtue (Hendarto, 2023). Joshanloo (2013a) based on an Islamic perspective also stated that the Western concept of happiness needed to pay attention to social and spiritual aspects in developing a theory of well-being.

Koburtay et al. (2022) accommodated the values of spirituality and religiosity as an extension of Ryff's PWB theory and measurement. The research integrates Ryff's six-factor PWB model with worship, contemplation, and patience where the existing or established PWB model was criticized. Other studies support that religiosity plays an important role in PWB students who memorize the Qur'an by 26.9% (Sukmawati & Husna, 2023). In addition, the practice of worship, in this case, the Ngrowot tradition, can increase the PWB of students (Mardhika & Hidayati, 2019).The role of religion and spirituality in improving well-being and health can be an important component. Embracing the spiritual world, especially through relationships with nature can also be an important step in advancing the understanding of well-being (Ryff, 2021). Furthermore, the PWB theory received criticism from other scholars or Ryff where gaps for improvement and development of the PWB theory were found.

Besides theoretical criticism, the PWB measurement method also needs attention prompting Ryff to develop a self-report scale in measuring the well-being based on the six-factor model in 1989. Initial research showed that the six-factor model is suitable in the United States with an internal correlation coefficient of 0.86-0.93 across 120 items (Ryff, 1989). In 1995, this scale was revised to three items per dimension for a national survey with an internal correlation coefficient of 0.33-0.56 (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The reduction of these items in empirical data indicates a problem with the internal correlation coefficient. Furthermore, the research has limitation where it only focuses on the United States population and is further recommended to be tested in different cultural contexts. This research focuses on adolescents and adults because the development and critique of PWB theory and its application are more focused on this age group (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Furthermore, adolescents and adults are relevant to the dynamics of psychological development within Ryff's PWB theory, as it was originally developed (Ryff, 1989).

This research aimed to evaluate criticisms of Ryff's PWB construct based on the development of Ryff's PWB scale in different cross-cultural contexts and variations in the number of items. Furthermore, the analysis reviewed the validity and reliability of the PWB scale in-depth by assessing the suitability when applied to various cultures. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, it comprehensively collects, evaluating, and synthesizes related publications to assess the quality and relevance of existing criticisms (Lame, 2019). Relevant non-epistemic values in psychology was also focued on by the analysis (Colombo et al., 2016; Mattes, 2019) to provide more concrete suggestions for the development of the Ryff's PWB scale and future research directions.

METHOD

Procedures

This research which was based on SLR analysis used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) reporting technique. However, the analysis was not registered with PROSPERO during the time of this subject.

Research Question

The research question aimed to answer the agreed-upon agenda and further determine the focus of the SLR analysis (Tranfield et al., 2003). Two key questions were asked including (1) how had Ryff's PWB scale developed from year to year in various populations around the world, and (2) what were the main limitations found in the publication on Ryff's PWB scale as well as the recommendations given for future research?

Search Strategy

In May 2024, a search was conducted using a single database namely Google Scholar due to the ability to capture literature widely from various sources. Google Scholar was chosen because it provides a broader and more comprehensive search and includes relevant articles from multiple sources, including indexed journals. This ensures a more inclusive search for articles on the Ryff PWB scale, which may be missed in other baseline data. Halevi et al. (2017) stated that Google Scholar's coverage is broader and includes more publications, Khalid et al. (2025) while emphasized that Google Scholar allows for more comprehensive searches across disciplines.

The keywords used to search for this research were "Ryff's" AND "Scales" AND "Psychological Well-Being" AND ("Validity" OR "Reliability" OR "Psychometry"). A literature search of a single database resulted in 193 articles and 11 were added from other database sources, prompting the total number to be 204. The search results were exported to reference manager software namely Mendeley Desktop where no duplicate articles were found. Based on these results, seven duplicates were found and removed which prompted the total articles to be 437.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

During the stage of inclusion and exclusion, the criteria were determined to filter articles against bias (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022). The inclusion criteria in this research were full-text journal articles in English which contained "Ryff's" AND "Scales" AND "Psychological Well-Being" AND "Six Factor" ("Validity" OR "Reliability" OR "Psychometry") in the title, abstract, or keywords. Furthermore, other criteria included psychometric analysis, adolescent & adult samples, research on the worldwide population, and a minimum indexed by Scopus Q3. The Scopus journal indexing which was stated was also used by evaluating the quality of journal articles using Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) (Kianifar et al., 2014). The exclusion criteria for research were outside journal articles including not the use of English, child samples, not the use of psychometric analysis, and not indexed by Scopus with a minimum of Q3. During the stage, the selection was performed by reading the titles, abstracts, and keywords which removed certain articles and producing 30 articles.

Quality Assessment

There was no agreed definition of quality standards prompting the authors to determine personal standards (Yang et al., 2021). After using Scopus indexing with a minimum of Q3, the entire text of the journal article was read. The suitability of the journal article to the research

question was the quality standard that should be fulfilled. The author further agreed to exclude one journal article because it was based on SLR that aimed to observe the impact of PWB on mental and physical conditions in clinical populations. This did not further carry out a psychometric assessment of Ryff's PWB scale (Brandel et al., 2017), leading to 29 synthesized articles in this research.

Data Extraction

Microsoft Excel software was used to create a summary table of the research to be synthesized. Category coding was also performed based on information about the author, publication year, country, sample, dimensions, number of items, analysis method, and results. The reviewer resolved any issues that arose during the data extraction process. This process ensured that the data extracted from various research were consistent and accurate as well as any differences in data interpretation were resolved through discussion and consultation with other members.

PRISMA Reporting

The steps explained in this research were depicted using the PRISMA protocol flow diagram in Figure 1 by describing the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion process in SLR analysis (Moher et al., 2015).

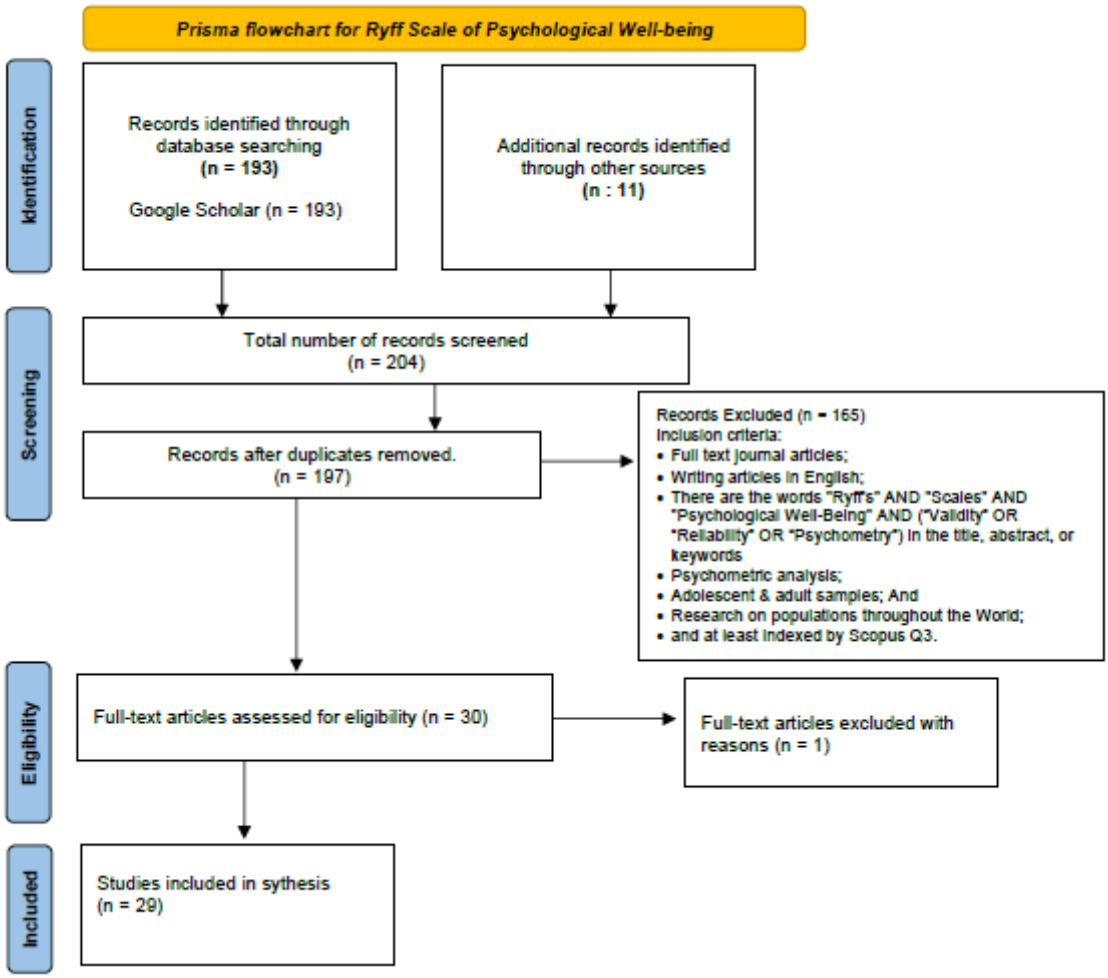

Figure 1. Summary of the SLR Process

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Sites

Table 1.
Location of Ryff's PWB Scale Research

Country	Frequency
United States of America	6
Spain	5
England	2
Japan	2
Canada	2
Sweden	2
South Africa	1
Australia	1
Netherlands	1
Belarus & Italy	1
China	1
Finland	1
Hong Kong	1
Romania	1
Singapore	1
Taiwan	1

Numerous research on Ryff's PWB scale focused on Western countries such as the United States and Spain. Countries in other continents such as Africa, Latin America, and much of Asia possessed little to no research using Ryff's PWB scale. Research in countries with different cultural and religious values was lacking. For example, research in Muslim countries was scarce despite Muslim populations having different values and norms that could influence the concept of PWB.

Ryff's PWB scale needed further research in underrepresented countries to understand the validity and reliability in different cultural or religious contexts. More in-depth research in countries with collectivist or predominantly Muslim cultures such as many countries in Asia and Africa could provide better insight into how Ryff's PWB scale functions in these contexts.

Certain research further tested multiple items simultaneously such as van Dierendonck (2004), Springer and Hauser (2006), Burns and Machin (2009), and Springer et al. (2011). Based on Table 2, the variation in the number of items on Ryff's PWB scale ranged from 18 to 120 while 12 items were conducted using a telephone. The reliability of the scale was further taken based on the lowest and highest coefficients from certain research. The scale with 18 items was the most widely used but had problems with reliability. Table 2 generally showed that fewer number of Ryff's PWB scale indicating a decrease in reliability led to more value suggesting good reliability. In the example, the 20 and 29-item scales showed relatively good results but the scale changed the construct structure into four factors. This description suggested that efforts were needed to develop a scale with a more efficient number of items while maintaining high validity and reliability.

Table 2.
Number of Items and Scale Reliability

Number of Items	Frequency	Scale Reliability
120	1	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.87-0.93
84	5	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.74-0.90
54	5	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.58-0.71
44	1	Internal correlation coefficient Ωw on subscale > 0.70
42	5	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.44-0.78
39	1	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.68-0.82
33	1	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.60-0.75
29	1	Into a 4-factor structure, with coefficients 0.561-1.00
24	1	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.52-0.68
20	1	Being a 4-factor structure, with ordinal alpha coefficients of 0.79-0.87
19	1	Not explained
18	11	The internal correlation coefficient α moves from 0.08-0.71
12 (Call)	1	Not explained

Ryff's PWB Construct Structure

Ryff proposed a six-factor model in the initial research on the development of the PWB scale with 120 (Ryff, 1989) and 18 items (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The six-factor model was supported by certain research including Kitamura et al. (2004), Cheng and Chan (2005), Lindfors et al. (2006), Sirigatti et al. (2013), Kállay and Rus (2014), Li et al. (2015), Hsu et al. (2017), and Espinoza et al. (2018). This research supported the six-factor model proposed by Ryff in different cultural contexts. Henn et al. (2016) and Gao and McLellan (2018) found that the six-factor model had a better fit than others but the fit value did not fulfill good standards. An interesting results showed that the six-factor model possessed a good fit by integrating two aspects of spirituality, namely inner resources and relationship with a higher power (van Dierendonck, 2004).

The six-factor model of Ryff had been criticized by various cross-cultural research such as Springer stating that the factors were highly correlated prompting the constructs to be untruly distinct (Springer et al., 2011; Springer & Hauser, 2006). Four constructs possessed high correlation values including personal growth (PG), purpose in life (PL), self-acceptance (SA), and environmental mastery (EM) (Springer et al., 2006). Other research proposed Ryff's PWB construct into three factors namely Subjective well-being, PG and Positive Psychological Functioning, as well as A and PL (Kafka & Kozma, 2002). Abbott et al. (2006) further proposed a single second-order factor model namely General Well-being (EM, PG, PL, SA), A and Positive Relations with Others.

The research trend of the last six years since 2018 showed that Ryff's six-factor model did not fit the empirical data. Viejo et al. (2018) also showed that PWB was supported by four factors namely SA, positive interpersonal relationships, A, and life development with an internal reliability coefficient of 0.70 for all dimensions. The development of the 42-item PWB scale in Japan further supported five factors namely (1) negative items including EM, PL, and SA, (2) positive items such as EM, PL, and SA, (3) PR, (4) A, as well as (5) PG and PL integrated with other factors (Sasaki et al., 2020). In Sweden, the development of the 18-item PWB scale showed that the CFA of the six-factor model had a poor fit but supported a five-factor structure without the purpose in life subscale (Garcia et al., 2023). Additionally, Saajanaho et al. (2021)

reported that Ryff's PWB scale through EFA and CFA calculations did not support the six-factor structure proposed by Ryff. The internal correlation coefficient with Cronbach's alpha of 42 items moved from 0.44-0.88, implying very low to very good.

Blasco-Belled and Alsinet (2022) stated that there were four main dimensions with a combination of several dimensions. The first dimension was a combination of SA, PL, and EM while the second was A. The third dimension was PG with the fourth being PR (Blasco-Belled & Alsinet, 2022). The PWB scale in Singapore found five new factors, including acceptance, A, PL, PR, and self-determination. The development of 18 items in Singapore had an internal correlation coefficient of Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 but had problematic validity (Tay, 2023). Cross-cultural results showed that Ryff's six-factor PWB structure was less empirically consistent where recent research recommended more appropriate models such as three, four, or five factors. This reflected the need for a more flexible and contextual measurement method to understanding PWB.

Table 3.
Test Results of Ryff's PWB Scale Model

Author	Initial Factor Structure	Factor Structure After Testing
Ryff (1989)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Ryff & Keyes (1995)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Kafka & Kozma (2002)	Six-Factor Model	There were three factors: the first factor (Subjective well-being), the second factor (Personal Growth and Positive Psychological Functioning), and the third factor (Autonomy and Positive Relations with Others).
Kitamura et al. (2004)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Van Dierendonck (2004)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model fits the empirical data with the addition of spiritual aspects.
Cheng & Chan (2005)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Abbot et al. (2006)	Six-Factor Model	Single second-order factors, namely general well-being (EM, PG, PL, SA), Autonomy, and Positive Relations with Others.
Lindfors, Berntsson, & Lundberg (2006)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Springer & Hauser (2006)	Six-Factor Model	Due to the high correlation between dimensions, PWB did not have six separate factors.
Springer, Hauser, & Freese (2006)	Six-Factor Model	Four (PG, PL, SA, & EM) of the six-factors correlated highly; there was a PWB Ryff construct problem.
Triado et al. (2007)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor two second-order factors model showed a better fit to the data, namely Hedonic (EM, SA, PR, A) and eudaimonic (PG & PL).
Burns & Machin (2008)	Six-Factor Model	Three-factor model, namely autonomy, positive relations, and superordinate factors (EM, PG, PL, SA).

Author	Initial Factor Structure	Factor Structure After Testing
Van Dierendonck (2008)	Six-Factor Model	A six-factor model with one second-order factor underlying all dimensions showed the best fit.
Abbot et al. (2010)	Six-Factor Model	The second-order factor, containing four dimensions (EM, PG, PL, SA), showed higher measurement precision than individual dimensions in PWB measurements.
Villar et al. (2010)	Six-Factor Model	This resulted in a four-factor model, namely self-confidence (SA & A), orientation to present (EM & PL), stress (EM- & A), and social tension (PR).
Springer, Pudrovska, & Hauser (2011)	Six-Factor Model	Some dimensions of PWB were not completely independent and required rethinking the structure of Ryff's six-factor model.
Sirigatti et al. (2012)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Kallay & Rus (2014)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Li, Kao, & Wu (2015)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Henn, Hill, & Jorgensen (2016)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model had a better fit than the other models. However, the calculation results showed a moderate fit.
Hsu et al. (2016)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Espinoza et al. (2018)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model was fit to the empirical data.
Gao & McLellan (2018)	Six-Factor Model	The six-factor model had a better model fit, but its values did not fulfill the general criteria.
Viejo, Gómez-López, & Ortega-Ruiz (2018)	Six-Factor Model	The model with four dimensions showed a good fit to the data. Self-Acceptance (SA); Positive Interpersonal Relationship (PR); Autonomy (A); Life Development (PG, PR).
Sasaki et al. (2020)	Six-Factor Model	Resulting in a five-factor model, namely Factor 1 (Negative items EM, PL, SA); Factor 2 (Positive items EM, PL, SA); Factor 3 (PR); Factor 4 (A); Factor 5 (PG).
Saajanaho et al. (2020)	Six-Factor Model	Neither EFA nor CFA supported the theoretical six-factor structure hypothesized for Ryff's PWB scale.
Blasco-Belled & Alsinet (2022)	Six-Factor Model	There are four main dimensions: Dimension 1 (SA, PL, EM), Dimension 2 (A), Dimension 3 (PG), and Dimension 4 (PR).
Garcia, Kazemitabar, & Asgarabad (2023)	Six-Factor Model	The five-factor model includes autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance.
Tay (2023)	Six-Factor Model	EFA revealed a new five-factor structure: SA, A, PL, Self-determination (A & PG), and PR.

Discussion

Part of the main challenges in the development of Ryff's PWB scale is maintaining stable validity and reliability across cultures. Although the 120-item scale introduced by Ryff in 1989 showed high validity and reliability, the large number of items made the scale impractical and difficult to apply widely. Subsequent research using shorter scales such as 18 items showed decreased reliability with internal correlation coefficients ranging from low to moderate (Garcia et al., 2023; Tay, 2023). This challenge outlines the importance of balancing scale practicality with measurement accuracy.

Research in different countries with different numbers of items has showed mixed results where some support the six-factor model (Espinoza et al., 2018; Kitamura et al., 2004; Sirigatti et al., 2013) while others propose alternative structures such as four or five factors (Burns & Machin, 2009; Garcia et al., 2023; Sasaki et al., 2020; Villar et al., 2010). This indicates various problems in theory and measurement (Springer et al., 2011; Springer & Hauser, 2006). However, the six-factor model can still be maintained despite being carried out in a collectivistic cultural context. Kitamura et al. (2004) in Japan stated that students could accept Western individualistic values due to globalization. Modification of PWB items was also carried out by research in Hong Kong because the scale was influenced by the values of fatalism and social interdependence in the elderly sample (Cheng & Chan, 2005).

The incompatibility of the six-factor model applied to different cultural contexts is due to several reasons. Research on Ryff's PWB scale in Spanish adolescents showed that adolescents possessed difficulty controlling the environment and formulating life objectives, thereby eliminating the EM and PL aspects (Viejo et al., 2018). The interdependent self and collectivist cultures further influence the definition of well-being for Japanese community which eventually turns into five PWB factors (Sasaki et al., 2020). Changes in psychological aspects in older samples such as experienced PL in life and cognitive decline factors can affect the six-factor PWB model (Saajanaho et al., 2021). The "*carpe diem*" or enjoying life in the moment view causes the PL dimension to be lost in the Swedish cultural context. Individuals without a purpose in life are interpreted more positively (Garcia et al., 2023). Research in Spain using network analysis showed that SA, PL, and EM possessed inter-dimensional relationships prompting a single integrated dimension (Blasco-Belled & Alsinet, 2022). Furthermore, the use of EFA with principal components and Varimax rotation produces a new grouping namely acceptance derived from the SA and EM dimensions in youth research in Singapore (Tay, 2023).

Cross-cultural results showed that Ryff's PWB scale needed to adjust the number of items and factor structure to balance measurement practicality and accuracy across contexts. Validity techniques such as network analysis and EFA also help identify more empirically relevant structures, emphasizing the importance of an adaptive method to producing cross-culturally valid scales. Further research is recommended to explore the Muslim population which is still minimal in previous publication. This can be carried out by integrating aspects of spirituality and religiosity for a more holistic understanding of PWB (Ryff, 2021; van Dierendonck, 2004). The significant influence of Islam on Muslim lifestyle and mindset (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011) also has an impact on the clinical method (Altalib et al., 2019). Therefore, Ryff's PWB scale is needed to be adapted using the Islamic filter method (Kaplick & Skinner, 2017) with the six-factor model integrated alongside the concept of well-being in Islam. Adjusting the right number of items is also important to maintain a balance between practicality, validity, and reliability of measurement.

A limitation of this study is the use of Google Scholar as the sole database, which may have introduced selection bias because literature found in other databases was not captured. Second, the inclusion criteria, which limited only English-language articles indexed by Scopus Q3, also reduced the scope of relevant literature in other languages or non-indexed journals. Finally, the application of spirituality and religiosity in Islamic and non-Western cultural contexts remains limited, which reduces a holistic understanding of PWB. To address these limitations, expanded database use, more inclusive inclusion criteria, and further research on spirituality and religiosity in more diverse cultural contexts could provide a more comprehensive understanding of PWB.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study indicate that the development of Ryff's PWB scale over time is influenced by factors such as the number of items, culture, age, and validation techniques, which can affect the validity, reliability, and structure of the six-factor model. Recommendations for further research are divided into two parts: theoretical implications and practical implications. For theoretical implications, this study suggests adjusting the scale to reflect aspects of spirituality and religiosity, especially in the Islamic context, to produce a more holistic understanding of PWB. For practical implications, this study recommends adjusting the number of items to balance practicality, validity, and reliability, and encourages further research to explore Muslim populations and non-Western cultural contexts to improve the relevance and accuracy of measuring psychological well-being across cultures and religions.

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