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The Role of Socially Desirable Responses in the Assessment of Well-Being among Nigerian University Students

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Abstract

There is a growing research interest in psychosocial correlates of happiness in the field of positive psychology. However, research examining reported levels of happiness in the Nigerian context shows contradictory findings. The present study therefore examined whether socially desirable responding could account for such conflicting reports. Three hundred and fifty-three undergraduate students (194 males and 159 females) were conveniently drawn from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The respondents were aged 17 to 35years (M_{age} = 22.50; SD = 3.18). They completed study measures in addition to relevant demographic information. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to analyse the data. The results showed that higher incidence of socially desirable responses was positively related to scores on the subjective happiness scale (t = 6.70, p < .001), the positive affect dimensions of the I-PANAS-SF (t = 4.63, p <.001), and SPANE (t = 4.63, p < .001), while, higher incidence of socially desirable responses was negatively related to the negative affect dimensions of the I-PANAS-SF (t = -3.60, p < .001), and SPANE (t = -2.29, p < .01), but was not significantly related to the Satisfaction with Life scale. Therefore, we recommend that the susceptibility of affective evaluations of one's life to inaccurate reports should be taken into consideration prior to drawing conclusions from well-being indicators particularly in a Nigerian sample.

Keywords: *Subjective Well-Being, Positive Affect, Negative Affect, Life Satisfaction, Socially Desirable Responding*

Introduction

Interest in well-being research has been growing in recent decades (e.g. Seligman, 2011; Stratham & Chase, 2010), and one area that has received increased attention is subjective well-being (SWB; well-being as experienced by individuals). SWB is also known as happiness or people's affective and cognitive evaluations of their lives. The domains comprise high life satisfaction, high positive feelings and low negative feelings (Tov & Diener, 2013). SWB measures now form significant indicators of national development (e.g. UNDP, 2010). On the other hand, the validity of self-report measures of SWB has been a relevant research issue which has resulted in critical debate (Brajsa-Zganec et al., 2011). Consequently, it is important to consider the susceptibility of self-report measures to response bias because of the nature of

SWB, the way it is measured, and the high possibility that cultural and linguistic factors might introduce biases in SWB scores. This poses substantial challenge to SWB indicators. Hence, the aim of this paper is to examine the extent to which measures of the domains of SWB are prone to SDR, which usually threatens the validity of self-reported data in survey studies. Socially desirable response is the tendency of respondents responding to self-report questionnaires in ways as to make themselves look good, thereby giving positive self-descriptions, rather than responding in accurate and truthful manners (Holtgraves, 2004), which could undermine the validity of measures of SWB (Holder, 2012). Due to self-presentation concerns, survey respondents underreport socially undesirable activities and over report socially desirable ones (Krumpal, 2013).

There are varied opinions on the role of social desirability in response to SWB measures. Fastame and Penna (2012) reported that social desirability predicted measures of affect and emotional competencies, and contributed to predicting personal satisfaction, general perceived wellness and self-rated cognitive efficiency. Chen et al. (1997) reported that items designed to assess positive affect were endorsed more by people who score high on a measure of social desirability than those who score low on the same measure. Caputo (2017) found that all well-being measures (subjective happiness, general life satisfaction, gratitude and loneliness) showed modest significant correlations with social desirability, and he asserted that social desirability played little role in well-being self-report measures. Holder (2012) reported that the discrepancy between the findings of positive psychology and observations of human behaviour in several environments seem to confirm that socially desirable responding may undermine the validity of measures of positive SWB. Brajsa-Zganec et al. (2011) reported that social desirability was related to all dimensions of SWB through personality traits, and that higher scores on measures of SWB were associated with higher scores on social desirability. At an individual level, social desirability responding is correlated with life satisfaction (Steel & Ones 2002). On the contrary, Forgeard et al., (2011) reported that important information is lost when social desirability is removed from life satisfaction measures. However, Diener and Larsen (1984) reported that life satisfaction was more stable and consistent across situations than affect measures. In the same vein, Larsen et al. (1985) reported that the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS) does not evoke a socially desirable response set. Nonetheless, Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick (2008) opined that most researchers of SWB do not include measures of social desirability which are found to be of importance in explaining SWB.

In order to evaluate SWB, it is necessary to adopt both cognitive and affective measures (Kaliterna-Lipovcan & Prizmic-Larsen 2006). Our study integrated three different facets of well-being - subjective happiness, general life satisfaction, and positive and negative emotional responses. Well-being in general fosters a strong cultural expectation that unhappiness is unacceptable which could predispose unhappy people to imitate the behaviours of those who are genuinely happy in order to fit in (Caputo, 2017). Looking happy is one social value in Nigeria, difficult to identify because of its abstract nature but could be easily inferred from social norms exhibited in actual everyday behaviours (Columbus, 2014). In addition, having a collectivistic orientation often entails acting in a pleasant manner even when experiencing a negative mood or an adverse situation. This is sometimes called "suffering and smiling" in colloquial terms (Zombobah, 2020). As such, one is encouraged to wear a pleasant look amidst unpleasantness. Thus, life satisfaction (Steel & Ones, 2002) and well-being-related emotional responses may be biased by social desirability (Brajsa-Zganec et al., 2011; Fastame & Penna, 2013). The diverse reports from studies conducted in Western nations and a paucity of research examining the susceptibility of the components of SWB to socially desirable responding in a Nigerian sample make the present study important. On this note, the study aims at exploring whether responses of Nigerians to SWB measures could be influenced by social desirability. If so, does social desirability responding affect both the affective and the cognitive aspects of SWB? Hence, we hypothesize that social desirability would be implicated significantly in responses to the affective measures but not in the cognitive measures of SWB. This is because measures of affect could be more prone to social desirability responding due to the tendency of affect being transient, susceptible to momentary mood and cultural orientation of the respondent (Schwarz & Strack 1991). On the other hand, the cognitive measures of happiness are evaluative, and avails the respondents opportunity to compare their circumstances with appropriate personal standards which are likely to produce stable and cross-situationally consistent responses.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The study adopted a cross-sectional design to sample three hundred and fifty-three undergraduates (194 males (55%) and 159 females (45%)) who were conveniently drawn from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Respondents were mostly single (n = 346; 98%) and Christians (n = 349; 98.9%). The ethnic groups involved were Igbo (n = 331; 93.8%), Yoruba (n = 2; .6%), Niger Delta (n = 6; 1.7%), Igala (n = 3; .8%), and others (n = 11; 3.1%). Their ages ranged from

17 to 35 years (M = 22.50; SD = 3.18). Three hundred and fifty-three (353) copies of the questionnaires were administered to those respondents who agreed to partake in the study in their classrooms with the aid of two research assistants. Their sincere responses were sought and they were sufficiently guided in completing the questionnaires. The respondents were guaranteed anonymity as well as confidentiality. To preserve the homogeneity of the sample, all respondents were undergraduates irrespective of other demographic characteristics.

Instruments

The questionnaire included socio-demographic variables section (such as age, gender, ethnic group, etc.) and five instruments namely: the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS, Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), the International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Short Form (I-PANAS-SF, Thompson, 2007), the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE, Diener et al., 2010), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS; Diener et al.,1985), and the Socially Desirable Response Set Measure (SDRS-5, Hays et al., 1989).

The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper 1999)

The SHS is a four-item scale developed to measure global subjective happiness. It requires participants to indicate the appropriateness of each item in describing them using a 7-point response format, ranging from "*not at all"* (1) to "*a great deal"* (7). Examples of items are – (1) "In general I consider myself not a very happy person (1) to a very happy person " (7); (2) "Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself not a very happy person (1) to a very happy person" (7); (3) "Some people are generally very happy". Composite score for each individual is obtained by summing across the four items. Scores range from 4 to 28, with higher scores indicating higher level of global subjective happiness. In terms of validity, developers reported positive correlations that ranged from 0.52 to 0.72 (M = 0.62) between the SHS and other happiness measures. The SHS was also found valid in a Nigerian sample (Agbo, 2021). For the present study, we obtained internal consistency .70 and .90 using Cronbach's coefficient alpha and omega reliability estimate respectively.

The International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Short Form (I-PANAS-SF, Thompson 2007)

The I-PANAS-SF is a 10-item abridged form of the original Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). It was developed to assess the two major dimensions of affect – Positive (PA) and Negative (NA) affects. The PA dimension consists of the following items: *alert, active, determined, inspired,* and *attentive,* while the NA dimension consists of *ashamed, afraid, nervous, upset,* and *hostile*. Respondents were required to rate these positive and negative adjectives according to the extent to which each described the way they have felt, using a 7-point response format, ranging from *not at all* (1) to *always* (7). The higher scores on both PA and NA items indicate the tendency to experience a positive and negative mood. Developers reported a co-efficient alpha of 0.76 (NA) and .75 (PA), and an 8-week test-retest stability co-efficient of 0.84 ($p < .01$) for both the PA and NA subscales. In terms of validity, developers reported convergent validity of the I-PANAS-SF using Diener's (1984) measure of subjective well-being (SWB) and Lyubomirsky and Lepper's (1999) subjective happiness scale (SHS), and reported a positive correlation between the PA subscale and both SWB ($r = .33$, $p < .01$) and SHS ($r = .39$, $p < .01$), and a negative correlation between the NA subscale and both SWB ($r = –.33$, $p < .01$) and SHS ($r = –.51$, $p < .01$). The scale has been shown to perform creditably well across cultures (Thompson 2007), and was also found valid in a Nigerian sample (Agbo, 2016). The researchers obtained internal consistency .80 for PA and .70 for NA using Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

The Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE, Diener et al., 2010)

The Scale of Positive and Negative Experience is a 12-item scale developed to assess the two major dimensions of affect. The positive experience dimension consists of the following items: *positive, joyful, good, pleasant, happy,* and *contented,* while the negative experience dimension consists of *negative, sad, bad, unpleasant, afraid,* and *angry.* Respondents were required to rate these positive and negative adjectives according to the extent to which each described the way they have felt, using a 7-point response format, ranging from *not at all* (1) to *always* (7). The measure could be used to derive an overall affect balance score (SPANE-B), but could also be divided into positive and negative feelings scales. The Affect Balance (SPANE-B) score is a combination of both the positive and negative feelings, which is obtained by subtracting the negative feelings score from the positive feelings score. For the present study, we employed the positive and negative feelings sub-scales. The higher scores on both PA and NA

items indicate the tendency to experience a positive and negative mood respectively. The SPANE correlated substantially with the PANAS scales and several other scales of feelings. Likewise, it converged well with measures of emotions and well-being. For instance, Diener and colleagues reported a positive correlation between the PA subscale and the SWLS (r = .58, p < .001) and a negative correlation between the NA subscale and the SWLS (r = –.46, p < .001). Lambert, Passmore and Joshanloo (2018) reported good construct validity of the scale. We obtained internal consistency using Cronbach's coefficient alpha .71 for PA and .72 for NA in the present study.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS; Diener, et al., 1985)

The SwLS is a five-item measure developed to assess individual's global judgement of satisfaction with life as a whole. The items are (1) "in most ways, my life is close to my ideal" (2) "the conditions of my life are excellent" (Participants were requested to indicate the extent of their agreement with each item on a 7-point response format, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Items are directly scored, and response ratings are added to calculate a composite score, which could range from 5 to 35 with higher scores indicating more satisfaction with life as a whole. The SWLS has been used in numerous studies and has demonstrated good psychometric properties (Pavot & Diener 2008). Developers reported alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87 and 2-month test-retest stability co-efficient of 0.82. In terms of validity, Blais et al. (1989) reported a strong negative correlation (r = -0.72, p = 0.001) between the SWLS and the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck et al., 1961). The SwLS was found valid among Nigerians (Oladipo & Balogun, 2012). We obtained alpha reliability coefficients that range from .69 to .79 in the present study.

The Socially Desirable Response Set Measure (SDRS-5, Hays et al., 1989)

The SDRS-5 is a five-item measure developed to assess the degree to which self-report responses may be influenced by social desirability, that is, the tendency to give socially desirable responses. Examples of items are: – "I am always courteous even to people who are disagreeable," and "I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget." Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 7-point scale ranging from *1 = disagree strongly* to *7 = agree strongly*. In terms of scoring, items 1 and 5 are reverse-scored and total scores on the measure range from 1 to 35, with higher scores representing greater tendency to present oneself in a socially desirable manner. Internal

consistency reliability of the scale was acceptable in two studies (Cronbach's alpha = .66 and .68 respectively) and a test-retest reliability of .75 (Hays et al., 1989). . We found alpha reliability coefficient of .77 in the present study.

Statistical Analysis

Pearson's Correlation (*r*) analysis was conducted to examine the relationships of the demographic factors and the SwLS, I-PANAS-SF, SPANE, SHS, and SDR, while hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis for the study. The reason for the choice of correlation is based on Urbina (2014) assertion that correlations play a major role in demonstrating linkages between (a) scores on different tests, (b) test scores and non-test (demographic) variables, (c) scores on parts of tests and scores on whole tests, etc. On the other hand, multiple regression analysis allows researchers to simultaneously use several predictor variables. Due to the evidence of the contribution of relevant demographic factors in several countries including Nigeria (e.g., Omigbodun et al., 2008; Saadu, 2019; Uğurlu, et al., 2009) the demographic factors were included in the first step of the regression analysis as control variables, while socially desirable responding was entered in the second stage. We decided to use a combination of I-PANAS-SF and SPANE which are general measures on positive and negative affects (such as anger, joy, fear, etc.) because they provide more comprehensive sample of emotions involved in well-being experience. By so doing, one would be able to explain better the variation in the dependent variable, and hence make more accurate predictions. All analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 (Mendenhall, Beaver, & Beaver, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Results

The descriptive statistics and correlation matrices for the study variables are presented in Table I below.

Table I: The Descriptive statistics and Correlation matrices for the study variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Age	22.50	3.18									
2.Gender	____	____	-.23**								
3.SWLS	20.56	5.77	.10	.04							
4.I-PANAS-SF_PA		27.95	4.76	-.10	-.00	.23**					
5.I-PANAS-SF_NA		16.39	5.10	-.12*	-.01	-.18**	-.21**				
6.SPANE_NA	13.53	5.28	-.03	-.13*	-.22**	-.32**	.62**				
7.SPANE_PA	28.06	4.71	-.07	.07	.24**	.60**	-.28**	-.49**			
8.SHS	21.15	4.06	-.00	.02	.29**	.25**	-.29**	-.35**	.42**	.44**	
9. SDR	14.32	2.84	.09	.02	.09	.23**	-.08	-.13*	.30**	.24**	.34**

Note: N = 353. SWLS = the Satisfaction with Life Scale, I-PANAS_SF = International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, PA = Positive Affect, NA = Negative Affect, SPANE = Scale of Positive and Negative Experience, SHS = Subjective Happiness Scale, SDR = Social Desirable Responding.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Evidently, socially desirable responding had a significant positive correlation with I-PANAS-SF_PA ($r = .23$, $p < .001$), SPANE_PA ($r = .30$, $p < .001$), and SHS ($r = .34$, $p < .001$). The Table also displays that socially desirable responding had a significant negative correlation with SPANE_NA ($r = -.13$, $p < .05$), but was not significantly correlated with I-PANAS-SF_NA ($r = -.08$) and SwLS ($r = .09$).

The regression coefficients for the role of socially desirable responding in measures of SWB are presented in Table II below.

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Table II: Summary of Regression Coefficients for the role of socially desirable responding in SWB measures

Variables		**Step1**							**Step 2**						
		B	*B*	*t*	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF	*Sig*	*B*	β	*T*	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF	*Sig*
SHS	Age	.01	.00	.08	.01	.01	.76	.56	.03	.02	.44	.12	.11	44.84	.00
	Gender	.18	.02	.39					.11	.01	.24				
	SDR								.48	.34	6.70**				
I-PANAS-PA	Age	-.12	-.08	-1.31	.01	.01	1.82	.38	-.16	-.10	-1.72	.07	.06	21.46	.00
	Gender	-.20	-.02	-.38					-.30	-.03	-.59				
	SDR								.41	.24	4.63**				
1-PANAS-NA	Age	-.21	-.13	-2.40*	.02	.02	2.91	.06	-.17	-.11	-1.94	.05	.04	12.97	.00
	Gender	-.45	-.04	-.81					-.12	-.01	-.22				
	SDR								-.20	-.19	-3.60**				
SPANE-NA	Age	-.11	-.06	-1.03	.03	.03	2.41	.05	-.09	-.05	-.85	.04	.01	5.24	.01
	Gender	-1.54	-.15	-2.65*					-1.48	-.14	-2.56				
	SDR								-.23	-.12	-2.29*				
SPANE-PA	Age	-.09	-.06	-.96	.01	.01	1.91	.46	-.13	-.09	-1.50	.11	.10	37.72	.00
	Gender	.54	.06	1.04					.41	.04	.83				
	SDR								.52	.31	6.14**				
SwLS	Age	.16	.09	1.40	.01	.01	1.26	.29	.15	.08	1.49	.02	.01	2.20	.21
	Gender	.65	.06	1.02					.29	.03	.46				
	SDR								.16	.08	1.48				

Key: * = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$.

Result of the hierarchical multiple regressions for the test of hypotheses are shown in Table II. Age and gender were included in step 1 of the regression analysis as control variables due to their significant relationship with I-PANAS-NA and SPANE-NA in the correlation table respectively. Results showed that age was a significant negative predictor of I-PANAS-NA, β = -.13, $t(353) = -2.40$, $p<.01$, indicating that higher age was associated with less negative affect. The unstandardized regression co-efficient *B* (-.21) showed that each one unit rise in age was associated with .21 reduction in negative affect on the I-PANAS-SF. The contribution of the control variable in explaining the variance in I-PANAS-SF was 2% (R^2 = .02), and the entire model was not significant, $F(2,350) = 2.91$, $p = .06$, $R = .13$.

Gender was a significant negative predictor of SPANE-NA, β = -.15, $t(353) = -2.63$, $p<.01$, indicating that being a female was associated with reduced negative affect on the SPANE. The contribution of the control variable in explaining the variance in SPANE-NA was 3% (R^2 = .03), and the entire model was significant, $F(4,348) = 2.41$, $p<.01$, $R = .16$.

In step II, SDR had a significant positive relationship with subjective happiness (β = .34, $t = 6.70$, $p< .001$). The *B* (.48) showed that for every one unit rise in SDR, subjective happiness increased by .48 units, with SDR accounting for 11% of the variance in subjective happiness as represented by ($\Delta R^2 = .11$). The entire model was significant, $F(5,347) = 9.65$, $p<.001$, $R = .35$.

Also, SDR had a significant positive relationship with the positive affect dimension of the I-PANAS-SF (β = .24, t = 4.63, p< .001). The B (.41) showed that for every one unit rise in SDR, the report of positive experience on the I-PANAS-SF increased by .41 units, with SDR accounting for 6% of the variance in the positive affect dimension of the I-PANAS-SF as represented by (ΔR^2 = .06). The entire model was significant, F(5,347) = 5.18, p<.001, R = .26.

In addition, SDR had a significant positive relationship with the positive affect dimension of the SPANE (β = .31, t = 6.14, p < .001). The B (.52) showed that for every one unit rise in SDR, the report of positive affect on the SPANE increased by .52 units, with SDR accounting for 10% of the variance in the positive affect dimension of the SPANE as represented by (ΔR^2 = .10). The entire model was significant, F(5,347) = 8.35, p<.001, R = .33.

On the other hand, social desirability responding had a significant negative relationship with the negative affect dimension of the I-PANAS-SF (β = -.19, t = -3.60, p< .001). The B (-.20) showed that for every one unit rise in social desirability responding, the report of negative affect on the I-PANAS-SF decreased by .20 units, with SDR accounting for 4% of the variance in the negative affect dimension of the I-PANAS-SF as represented by (ΔR^2 = .04). The entire model was significant, F(5,347) = 6.33, p<.001, R = .23.

Furthermore, social desirability responding had a significant negative relationship with the negative affect dimension of the SPANE (β =- .12, t = -2.29, p< .01). The B (-.23) showed that for every one unit rise in SDR, the report of negative affect decreased by .23 units, with SDR accounting for 1% of the variance in the negative affect dimension of the SPANE as represented by (ΔR^2 = .01). The entire model was significant, F(5,347) = 3.01, p<.01, R = .20. However, there was no significant relationship between social desirability responding and life satisfaction (β = .08).

Discussion

Reports from well-being measures now form significant indicators of development, and these measures could be significantly influenced by spurious artifacts such as socially desirable response. Therefore, the present study was aimed at exploring the relationship between socially desirable responding and measures of SWB. This is to test whether social desirability predicts the assessment outcomes of some well-being measures. We hypothesized that socially desirable responding would significantly influence responses to the affect measures of SWB and not the

cognitive measures. The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis. Thus, social desirability response is differentially implicated in the separate components of SWB. This is an indication that the various components of subjective well-being are different, separable and independent. This is in line with previous studies such as Agbo and Ome (2016). It was also observed that socially desirable responding is more related to the affect dimensions of SWB than to the evaluative or cognitive dimension. There was a significant positive correlation between socially desirable responding and measures of subjective happiness, and positive affect. Thus, people could be more inclined to provide overly positive self-descriptions when responding to measures of the affective aspect of SWB than when responding to measures of the cognitive aspect. This could be because affect is transient and felt in relation to someone and/or something. A person using a socially desirable response style might report a high level of positive affect, not because it is their true state, but because they believe that it is socially desirable to be happy (Columbus, 2014). If they believe that happiness is normatively appropriate, they may report that they are happier than other types of assessment may indicate (Zombobah, 2020). Similarly, someone could report experiencing less negative affect simply because it is more socially acceptable than representing an embodiment of negative feelings, emotions and experiences.

This is buttressed by Wood et al. (2010) assertion that socially desirable responding to SWB measures is linked to powerful social norms in evaluation of happiness. These norms require one “to put on a smiling face” and exhibit a positive, optimistic demeanour even in the face of challenges. Diener and colleagues reported that if a culture prescribes the experience of positive affect, and proscribes the experience of negative affect, people are prone to exhibiting socially desirable responses. Besides, Nigeria is a collectivist nation with perceptible strands of individualism (Agbo & Ome 2016). Individuals in a collectivist culture who emphasizes the centrality of the group could be more conforming, and have greater desire to be seen in a desirable light. In contrast, respondents in individualistic culture which emphasizes individual goals and uniqueness may not have a desire to report socially desirable responses like their collectivist counterparts.

The findings also indicated a significant negative relationship between socially desirable responding and the absence of negative affect. Thus, individuals who reported the absence of negative hedonic feelings, emotions and unpleasant experiences such as less distress, pain, worry, etc., which are indications of well-being were also likely to be responding in socially desirable ways. This could be because individuals tend to have the self-deceptive tendency to

hide undesirable feelings related to low emotional well-being (Lasgaard et al., 2011). The finding agrees with the findings of Brajsa-Zganec et al. (2011) and Caputo (2017) who reported that social desirability is associated with the absence of negative affect. This implies that affective measures of happiness might be susceptible to social desirability responding.

In addition, socially desirable responding had no significant influence on respondents' responses to the evaluative measure of happiness. Most individuals were unlikely to provide overly positive self-descriptions in their report of global judgement of satisfaction with life, which is the cognitive-judgemental aspect of SWB. An individual's report of feelings of contentment and fulfillment in diverse life domains such as academics, marriage, health, leisure and career was not significantly susceptible to faking. This is in line with the findings of Diener and Larsen (1984) who reported that life satisfaction was the most stable and cross-situationally consistent of any response they measured. The findings also agree with Larsen et al. (1985) who reported that the SwLS does not evoke a socially desirable response set, but leaves the respondent free to weight various domains (e.g. health or material wealth) and various feeling states (e.g. loneliness) in whatever way they chose. This is consistent with Veenhoven (2011) report of the absence of social desirability bias in happiness measures. However, the finding contradicts Forgeard et al. (2011) assertion that important information is lost when social desirability is removed from life satisfaction measures. The possible interplay of cultural values and the collectivistic social orientation of the Nigerian populace could account for this. Research has shown that cultural orientation could be a major force that influences the experience of well-being (Diener & Suh, 2000). Hence, global assessment of life satisfaction by Nigerians could reflect assessment of inner subjective experiences in relation to relational and normative factors, instead of portraying evaluative comparison between individuals' quality of life and ideal life. Judgements of life satisfaction in collectivistic societies are usually based on both emotional states and societal norms (Bhullar, Schutte, & Malouf, 2012).

Implications of Findings and Recommendations

The findings of the study imply that social desirability response bias could confound findings in SWB research especially in response to measures of the affect-based aspects of SWB, and should be taken into consideration by SWB researchers. Nigerians might have the tendency to respond in the affirmative to measures of affect in a bid to look good, as well as give positive self-descriptions at the expense of honesty and accuracy, since it is culturally agreeable to report more positive affect and less negative affect. In other words, there is a need to exercise caution in

drawing conclusions from well-being studies employing these measures, since the measures are often used in well-being research. It is also highly recommended that a lie scale or a measure of SDR accompany the administration of these instruments in diverse well-being research.

This study has some limitations. They include the sample which was not a national representation and not randomly selected. There could also be other mediating and moderating variables that could confound the findings of the present study. There were no tests of causal relations between study variables. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies should include other categories of individuals, randomly selected from a nationally representative sample. In sum, the researchers are of the opinion that prior to drawing conclusions on a nation's level of happiness, the susceptibility of affect measures to SDR by the desire to create a favourable impression should be taken into consideration, assessed and controlled.

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