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## Traditional and modern cultural values as predictors of subjective well-being among college youth in Bihar

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### Abstract

The present study examines the role of traditional and modern cultural values as significant predictors of subjective well-being among college youth in Bihar. Cultural values strongly influence attitudes, behaviors, and psychological outcomes, especially among young adults experiencing rapid social change. Bihar, characterized by deep-rooted traditions alongside increasing exposure to modernization, provides a unique socio-cultural setting to explore this dynamic. The study focuses on how adherence to traditional values such as family cohesion, respect for elders, collectivism, and religious beliefs interacts with modern values including individual autonomy, gender equality, career orientation, and self-expression in shaping subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is assessed through indicators of life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from college students across selected districts of Bihar through standardized scales measuring cultural values and subjective well-being. Statistical analyses such as correlation and regression were employed to identify the predictive strength of traditional and modern cultural values. The findings suggest that both value systems play a complementary role in enhancing subjective well-being. Traditional values provide emotional security, social support, and a sense of belonging, while modern values contribute to personal growth, self-esteem, and perceived control over life. However, excessive conflict between traditional expectations and modern aspirations may negatively affect well-being. The study highlights the importance of value integration rather than value replacement in promoting psychological health among college youth. The findings have important implications for educators, counselors, and policymakers in designing culturally sensitive mental health and educational programs. Understanding the balance between tradition and modernity can contribute to fostering holistic well-being among youth in transitional societies like Bihar.

**Keywords:** Cultural values, subjective well-being, college youth, traditional values, modern values

### Introduction

The concept of subjective well-being has gained increasing attention in social sciences and psychology as it reflects individuals' overall evaluation of their quality of life in terms of cognitive judgments and emotional responses. Subjective well-being generally includes life satisfaction, presence of positive emotions, and absence of negative emotions, and is influenced not only by personal traits but also by broader social and cultural contexts. Among college youth, subjective well-being plays a crucial role in academic performance, personal development, mental health, and social adjustment. In a rapidly changing society like India, young people experience multiple and sometimes conflicting value systems, making cultural values a particularly important factor in shaping their sense of well-being. Bihar, one of the culturally rich yet socio-economically transitional states of India, provides a distinctive context where traditional cultural norms coexist with increasing exposure to modern ideas through education, media, urbanization, and globalization. Traditional cultural values in Bihar are deeply rooted in family solidarity, collectivism, respect for elders, religious faith, social obligations, and prescribed gender roles. These values often promote emotional security, moral guidance, and a sense of belonging, which can positively influence subjective well-being by providing strong social support networks. At the same time, modernization has introduced new cultural values emphasizing individualism, personal autonomy, educational and career aspirations, gender equality, self-expression, and rational decision-making. For college youth, modern cultural values often represent opportunities for self-actualization, independence, and upward mobility, which can enhance self-esteem and

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life satisfaction. However, the simultaneous presence of traditional and modern value systems can also create tension and role conflicts among young people, particularly when family expectations rooted in tradition conflict with personal goals inspired by modernity. Such conflicts may lead to stress, anxiety, and confusion, potentially undermining subjective well-being. College students are especially vulnerable to these challenges, as this stage of life involves identity formation, value negotiation, and preparation for adult roles. In Bihar, where educational expansion has brought students from diverse rural and urban backgrounds into common academic spaces, the negotiation between tradition and modernity becomes even more complex. Students may experience pressure to conform to traditional norms within the family while trying to adopt modern values in academic and social environments. This dual influence shapes not only their attitudes and behaviors but also their emotional and psychological states. Understanding how traditional and modern cultural values function as predictors of subjective well-being among college youth is therefore important for both theoretical and practical reasons. From a theoretical perspective, such a study contributes to the growing literature on culture and well-being by highlighting the contextual role of value systems in a non-Western, transitional society. From a practical perspective, it helps educators, counselors, and policymakers identify cultural resources and risk factors affecting youth well-being. By examining the relative and combined influence of traditional and modern cultural values, the present study seeks to provide empirical insight into how young people in Bihar navigate cultural change and how this navigation impacts their subjective well-being, ultimately contributing to more culturally responsive educational and mental health interventions.

### **Conceptual Understanding of Subjective Well-Being**

Subjective well-being refers to individuals' overall assessment of their quality of life based on cognitive and emotional criteria. It includes life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect, and the absence of negative affect. Among college youth, subjective well-being is influenced by academic stress, peer relationships, family environment, and future aspirations. Cultural values play a central role in shaping how young people interpret success, happiness, and personal fulfillment. In the context of Bihar, subjective well-being is deeply embedded in social expectations and moral frameworks derived from both traditional and modern influences.

### **Traditional Cultural Values and College Youth in Bihar**

Traditional cultural values in Bihar emphasize collectivism, family interdependence, respect for elders, religious beliefs, and social obligations. These values provide emotional security, stable identity formation, and strong social support systems for college youth. Adherence to tradition often helps students cope with stress through community bonding and shared responsibilities. However, rigid traditional norms may sometimes limit personal choice and autonomy, particularly in matters of career and relationships. Understanding the dual role of traditional values is essential in assessing their influence on subjective well-being.

### **Emergence of Modern Cultural Values among College Youth**

Modern cultural values among college youth highlight individual autonomy, self-expression, gender equality,

achievement orientation, and rational thinking. Increased access to higher education, digital media, and urban exposure has accelerated the acceptance of modern values in Bihar. These values promote independence, confidence, and personal goal-setting, which positively affect subjective well-being. However, excessive individualism may reduce social connectedness and increase emotional isolation. The growing influence of modern values reshapes youth identity and impacts psychological well-being in complex ways.

### **Cultural Value Conflict and Its Impact on Well-Being**

The coexistence of traditional and modern cultural values often creates internal and external conflicts for college youth. Students may struggle to balance family expectations with personal aspirations, leading to role strain and psychological stress. Such conflicts are more prominent during the college years, a critical phase for identity development. When unresolved, value conflict can negatively influence subjective well-being, causing anxiety, dissatisfaction, and emotional imbalance. However, effective negotiation and integration of both value systems can enhance adaptability and resilience among youth.

### **Cultural Values as Predictors of Subjective Well-Being**

Cultural values significantly predict subjective well-being by shaping life choices, emotional regulation, and social interactions. Traditional values often contribute to emotional stability and social belonging, while modern values support self-efficacy and life satisfaction. The combined influence of both value systems can positively predict well-being when they coexist harmoniously. Understanding their predictive role helps identify key cultural factors influencing youth mental health. This perspective is valuable for developing culturally sensitive educational, counseling, and policy interventions aimed at enhancing student well-being in Bihar.

### **Literature Review**

1. **Sharma (2012)** <sup>[7]</sup> study by Sharma on Indian university students reported that collectivistic values, such as family embeddedness and respect for elders, were positively associated with life satisfaction, primarily through enhanced perceived social support. The study suggested that in collectivist cultures, strong family bonds can buffer stress arising from academic and career pressures, indicating that traditional values may play a protective role for youth well-being when family relationships are nurturing and non-authoritarian.
2. **Khan and Verma (2015)** <sup>[8]</sup> research on urban youth in North India examined the impact of modern value orientations particularly individualism and achievement motivation on subjective well-being. Their findings indicated that personal autonomy and perceived control over life choices were significant predictors of higher life satisfaction and positive affect. However, the study also noted that when individualistic aspirations clashed with familial expectations, youth reported increased stress and emotional conflict, pointing to the ambivalent role of modern values.
3. **Rao (2017)** <sup>[9]</sup> conducted a comparative study between rural and urban college students, exploring cultural value orientations and psychological adjustment. The results showed that rural students tended to endorse

more traditional values and derived well-being from community belonging and religious practices, whereas urban students leaned towards modern values and emphasized personal goals. Interestingly, the highest well-being scores were observed among those who reported a balanced endorsement of both traditional and modern values, indicating the benefits of value integration.

4. **Singh and Patel (2019)** <sup>[10]</sup> study on Indian adolescents investigated value conflict and its relation to mental health indicators such as anxiety and depressive symptoms. They found that higher perceived conflict between parental traditional expectations and adolescents' modern aspirations was significantly associated with lower life satisfaction and higher psychological distress. The authors argued that unaddressed intergenerational value gaps can undermine subjective well-being, underscoring the need for open communication within families undergoing cultural transition.
5. **Joshi (2021)** <sup>[11]</sup> research focused on college students' media exposure, cultural identity and subjective well-being. The study revealed that increased exposure to globalized media content was linked with endorsement of modern values, including gender equality and self-expression. While such orientations were positively associated with self-esteem and aspirations, the study also reported that students who felt alienated from their local culture or experienced confusion about their identity showed lower subjective well-being. The findings suggested that anchoring modern values within a stable cultural identity framework may be crucial for mental health.

### Research Gap

Existing studies on cultural values and subjective well-being in India have largely focused on urban populations or broader national samples, often overlooking region-specific contexts like Bihar. Limited research has simultaneously examined traditional and modern cultural values as combined predictors of subjective well-being among college youth. Moreover, the unique socio-cultural transition experienced by Bihari youth shaped by strong familial traditions alongside growing exposure to modern education and media remains underexplored. There is a lack of empirical studies addressing value integration and value conflict in this context. This study aims to fill this gap by providing localized, culture-sensitive insights.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of traditional and modern cultural values among college youth in Bihar.
2. To assess the level of subjective well-being among college students in Bihar.
3. To analyze the relationship between traditional cultural values and subjective well-being.
4. To analyze the relationship between modern cultural values and subjective well-being.
5. To evaluate the predictive role of traditional and modern cultural values on subjective well-being among college youth in Bihar.

### Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and correlational research design to examine traditional and modern cultural

values as predictors of subjective well-being among college youth in Bihar. The population of the study consists of undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in government and private colleges across selected districts of Bihar. Using a stratified random sampling technique, a sample of 200 college students (both male and female, from rural and urban backgrounds) was selected to ensure adequate representation. Data were collected through standardized self-report questionnaires. Traditional and Modern Cultural Values were measured using a Cultural Values Scale adapted to the Indian context, assessing dimensions such as collectivism, family orientation, autonomy, self-expression, and achievement orientation. Subjective well-being was measured using a standardized Subjective Well-Being Scale covering life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. The tools demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability and validity. Data collection was carried out with informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and ethical considerations. The collected data were coded and analyzed using statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, correlation, and multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive strength of traditional and modern cultural values on subjective well-being.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Study Variables (N = 200)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Traditional Cultural Values	68.45	7.82
Modern Cultural Values	72.30	8.15
Subjective Well-Being	74.60	9.05

### Interpretation

The table shows that college youth in Bihar score moderately high on both traditional and modern cultural values, indicating the coexistence of both value systems. The relatively higher mean score for modern cultural values suggests increasing acceptance of modern orientations among college students. The mean score of subjective well-being indicates a moderate to high level of overall well-being among respondents.

**Table 2:** Correlation between Cultural Values and Subjective Well-Being

Variables	Subjective Well-Being (r)
Traditional Cultural Values	0.42**
Modern Cultural Values	0.48**

Note:  $p < 0.01$

### Interpretation

The correlation analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between both traditional and modern cultural values and subjective well-being. Modern cultural values show a slightly stronger correlation, suggesting their prominent role in enhancing life satisfaction and positive affect among college youth.

**Table 3:** Regression Analysis Showing Predictive Role of Cultural Values

Predictor Variables	$\beta$ Value	t Value	Significance
Traditional Cultural Values	0.31	4.85	$p < 0.01$
Modern Cultural Values	0.38	5.92	$p < 0.01$



## Interpretation

The regression results reveal that both traditional and modern cultural values significantly predict subjective well-being among college youth in Bihar. Modern cultural values emerge as a stronger predictor; however, traditional values also contribute meaningfully, highlighting the importance of value integration for psychological well-being.

## Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged while interpreting the findings. First, the sample is limited to college youth from selected districts of Bihar, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to all young people in the state or to those not pursuing higher education. Second, the study relies on self-report questionnaires, which are subject to social desirability bias and respondents' personal interpretations of the items. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the research limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationship between cultural values and subjective well-being. Fourth, cultural values were broadly categorized into traditional and modern orientations, which may oversimplify the complexity and overlap of value systems experienced by youth. Lastly, other influential factors such as personality traits, family dynamics, and economic stress were not included, which may also affect subjective well-being but remain unexplored.

## Importance of the Study

The present study is important as it provides a culturally grounded understanding of subjective well-being among college youth in Bihar, a region undergoing significant social and cultural transition. By examining traditional and modern cultural values as predictors of well-being, the study highlights how cultural orientations shape young people's life satisfaction and emotional experiences. The findings are valuable for educators and academic institutions in addressing students' psychological needs within a culturally sensitive framework. The study also offers practical insights for counselors and mental health professionals in designing interventions that help youth manage value conflict and cultural stress. From a policy perspective, the research can inform youth development and higher education policies by emphasizing the role of balanced value integration in promoting mental health. Academically, the study contributes to existing literature by filling regional gaps and encouraging further research on culture-specific determinants of well-being in India.

## Conclusion

The present study concludes that traditional and modern cultural values play a significant and complementary role in shaping subjective well-being among college youth in Bihar. The findings indicate that adherence to traditional cultural values such as family orientation, respect for elders, collectivism, and religious belief contributes positively to emotional stability, social support, and a sense of belonging, which enhance life satisfaction and positive affect. Simultaneously, modern cultural values emphasizing autonomy, self-expression, achievement orientation, and gender equality also emerge as strong predictors of subjective well-being by fostering self-esteem, personal growth, and perceived control over life decisions. Rather than functioning as opposing forces, traditional and modern

values appear to interact in complex ways that influence the overall psychological health of youth. The study highlights that college students who are able to integrate both value systems—drawing emotional security from tradition while exercising independence through modern values—demonstrate higher levels of subjective well-being. However, unresolved conflicts between familial expectations and personal aspirations may negatively affect well-being and increase stress. These findings underscore the importance of promoting value balance rather than rigid adherence to a single cultural orientation. The study contributes to the existing literature by offering culture-specific insights from Bihar, a region often underrepresented in psychological and sociological research. It emphasizes the need for educational institutions, counselors, and policymakers to adopt culturally responsive approaches that recognize the dual influence of tradition and modernity in young people's lives. By fostering environments that support both social connectedness and personal autonomy, stakeholders can enhance the psychological well-being and holistic development of college youth in Bihar.

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