

**HOW SUITABLE IS THE SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE FOR USE ON ADOLESCENTS IN NIGERIA?****Oladipo S.E. (PhD)**Department of Counselling Psychology  
College of Applied Education and  
Vocational Technology, Tai Solarin University of Education,  
Ijagun, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.  
Email: [Kingola2001@yahoo.com](mailto:Kingola2001@yahoo.com)

&amp;

**Balogun S.K. (Professor)**Department of Psychology  
Faculty of the Social Sciences  
University of Ibadan  
Oyo State, Nigeria  
Email: [shyngle61@yahoo.com](mailto:shyngle61@yahoo.com)

Accepted 25 January, 2012

**ABSTRACT**

This paper describes the re-validation of satisfaction with life scale for use in Nigeria. Whereas adult life satisfaction has been studied extensively, the life satisfaction of adolescents has only received attention more recently. Yet life satisfaction is a central construct in positive psychology. It is believed that re-validation of the scale will make it culturally valid for use in Nigeria. Using a convenient sampling procedure, 1429 undergraduates were sampled from four universities in southwestern Nigeria to participate in the study. 475 (33.2%) males and 953 (66.8%) females, ages ranging between 16 to 27 years ( $M=28.47$ ,  $SD = 8.76$ ). Principal component analysis yielded only component solution which accounted for 70% of variance. Cronbach alpha of .79 was obtained for the scale. It was concluded that the satisfaction with life scale has a good structural characteristic and is a reliable and valid instrument that can be used among adolescents in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** life satisfaction, undergraduates, adolescents, Southwestern, Nigeria, psychometric properties.

**INTRODUCTION**

Life satisfaction as a psychological construct has been identified as one factor in the more general construct of subjective well being, which is more cognitively than emotionally driven (Corrigan, 2000). The other two aspects of subjective well-being are: positive affective appraisal and negative affective appraisal. Life satisfaction can be assessed specific to a particular domain of life (e.g., work, family) or globally. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Diener, et al (1985) as a global measure of life satisfaction which consists of 5-items and can be administered in few minutes. It has been used in several studies all over the world, on different categories of respondents; ranging from adolescents, adults and elderly people. However, there is little or no evidence that it has been frequently used in Nigeria, particularly among adolescents who form the major part of the population. Yet it is equally important to know the level of life satisfaction of people in different age brackets within the Nigerian context in order to know their level of satisfaction with their lives and be able to advise them on how to be more satisfied with their lives.

As the most populous country in Africa, gaining independence from British colonial government on October 1, 1960, Nigeria, accounts for approximately one-sixth of Africa's people (Wikipedia, 2009; CIA World Factbook, 2009). Approximately 50% of Nigerians are urban dwellers. At least 24 cities have populations of more than 100,000. The variety of customs, languages, and traditions among Nigeria's 250 ethnic groups gives the country a cultural diversity (Wikipedia, 2009). The major religions are Christianity, Islam and indigenous beliefs. Although English is the official language, there are several other languages apart from the major ones of Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Nigeria is nearly equally divided between Christianity and Islam. The majority of Nigerian Muslims are concentrated in the northern area of the country, while Christians dominate in the Middle Belt, South and Southwest. According to a 2009 Pew survey 50.4% of Nigeria's population are Muslims. Another Pew study in 2011 estimated that Christians form the majority of the nation, comprising 50.8% of the population. Adherents of other religions make up 1.4% of the population (Wikipedia 2009).

As important as the subject of life satisfaction has been all over the world, it is worthy of note that there is paucity of literature on the subject of life satisfaction in Nigeria and particularly among adolescents who form the bulk of the population. It is expedient therefore, to focus research attention on this aspect of research, not only to contribute to available literature, but to know the level of satisfaction of this group of people in order to ascertain their functionality and level of productivity and contribution to national development. To achieve this purpose, it is needful to administer the right instrument and the instrument needs to be revalidated for use within the Nigerian context; hence the need for a study as this. It is hypothesized that the instrument will be a valid instrument for use in Nigeria.

The purpose of this study therefore is to establish the psychometric properties of the satisfaction with life scale, with the view to ascertaining its suitability for use on adolescents in Nigeria. A study of this kind is deemed necessary because satisfaction with life is a global issue and it is not restricted to a particular race, ethnicity, culture or language. Therefore, sooner or later, satisfaction with life as a construct in Subjective Well-being will be measured within the Nigerian setting and it will be ideal to establish the

**Corresponding Author:** Balogun S.K. (Professor)

Department of Psychology  
Faculty of the Social Sciences  
University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria  
Email: [shyngle61@yahoo.com](mailto:shyngle61@yahoo.com)

reliability and validity of the Diener et al (1985) satisfaction with life scale as a useful tool in this regard.

**METHOD**

**Design**

The study is a cross-cultural survey; hence the ex post facto survey research design was adopted for the study.

**Participants**

A total of 1429 undergraduates who were drawn from four universities in southwestern Nigeria participated in the study. 475 (33.2%) of the participants were males and 953 (66.8%) females; their ages ranged between 16 to 27 years (M=28.47, SD = 8.76). 828 (58%) of the participants were Yoruba; 558(39%) were Igbo, while 43(3%) were Hausa. Distribution by religion showed that 643 (45%) of the participants were Muslims; 714(50%) were Christians; while 71(5%) belong to other religions. Since English language is an official language in Nigeria and the respondents are university students, the questionnaires were administered in English language and there was no need for translation into any indigenous language. All respondents were in the final year of their study in the university.

**Measure**

The instrument of data collection is the 5-item; likert format Satisfaction with Life Scale, which was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, (1985.) the items on the scale include the following: (1.) In most ways my life is close to my ideal. (2.) The conditions of my life are excellent. (3.) I am satisfied with my life. (4.) So far I have gotten the important things I want in life. (5.) If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

The scale has been reported to consistently show good psychometric properties and has been used in a number of studies. For example Abolghasemi, and Varaniyab, (2010) reported an alpha reliability co-efficient of .82; Köker (1991), .80 and for this present study a reliability co-efficient of .79 was established. Each item on the scale is scored from 1 to 7 in terms of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” A total score was calculated from the 5 items, the range being 5 to 35. A score of 20 is the middle point, so higher scores indicate high satisfaction with life.

**Procedure**

Samples were drawn from two federal and two state universities in southwestern Nigeria. The choice of these universities was based on proximity and easy accessibility to the researcher. Basically, therefore, the convenient sampling method was employed for data collection. Personal contact was established in each of the universities from where samples were drawn and assistance was sought for the administration of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were personally taken to the contact in each of the universities and were instructed to adhere strictly to

the ethical principles in research (which includes voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity) while administering the questionnaires. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were sent to each of the universities, all were returned after a period of four (4) weeks. However, only 1429 of the total questionnaires were found good enough for inclusion in the analysis. Others were rejected because they were wrongly filled, partially filled or completely left blank without any response.

**Analysis and Results**

**Reliability:** To test the reliability of the scale, the internal consistency of the whole scale was measured and it yielded an Alpha reliability coefficient of .79 and split-half reliability coefficient of .65 which seem to be a good reliability.

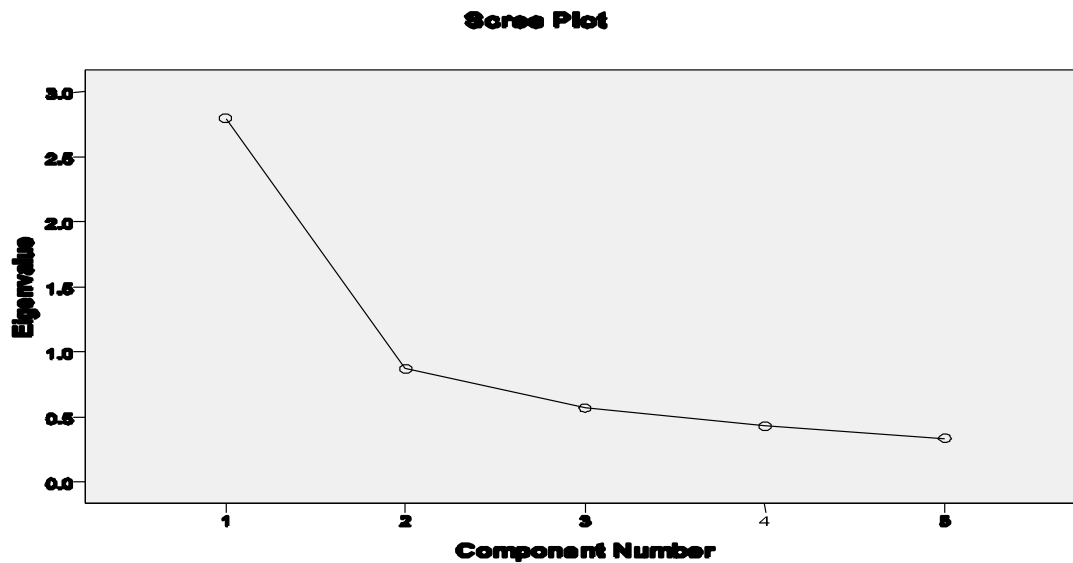
**Scoring:** The scale is in the likert format, with response options scored from 1 to 7 in terms of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” A total score was calculated from the 5 items, the range being 5 to 35. A score of 20 is the middle point, so higher scores indicate high satisfaction with life.

**Scale’s Dimensions:** The scale has only one dimension. This is consistent with previous works of the original developers and others who have re-validated the scale for use in some other settings. The inter-item correlation matrix was factor analyzed using principal axis factor analysis. The number of factors to be extracted was determined by an inspection of the scree plot of eigenvalues. Using this criterion, a single factor emerged, accounting for 56% of the variance. The SWL items and their respective factor loadings for the present study (put side-by-side of the findings of Diener et al (1985)) are presented in Table 1

**Table 1. Satisfaction with life scale and factor loadings**

items	Factor Loadings	
	Present Study	Diener et al (1985)
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	.71	.84
The conditions of my life are excellent.	.83	.77
am satisfied with my life	.79	.83
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	.72	.72
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	.66	.61

The scree plot for the items is shown in table 2 below. No varimax rotation was done because such could not be carried out on a single factor scale. The figure below shows the scree plot for. The eigenvalues are shown on the y axis, while the numbers on the x axis of the graph indicate the number of items respectively.



## Discussion

Although several studies (particularly outside Nigeria) have been conducted using Diener et al (1985) satisfaction with life scale; there is paucity of literature regarding studies that have been conducted to re-establish its validity especially within Nigeria. Yet, the need for cross-cultural investigation of instruments has been stressed by Hui & Triandis, (1985). Alkhateeb, (2001) also emphasized the need for the examination of the psychometric characteristics of scales across other cultures and contexts. The present study focused on the revalidation of satisfaction with life scale for use in Nigerian. Consequent upon the extraction criteria set for the principal component analysis, a 5-item one-component solution was established, which is in agreement with the findings and reports of the original developers of the scale.

Since it was a single factor scale, varimax rotation was not a possibility. The reliability thus established also affirms that the wording of the items as well as the language is ok, since there seems not to be any confusion or ambiguity perceived by the respondents. It thus means that the scale is culturally relevant and suitable for use in Nigerian context.

## Conclusion

In the light of the above result and discussion, the conclusion is that the high alpha value obtained for this scale suggests that it is suitable for use among adolescents in Nigeria.

## References

- Abolghasemi, A. & Varaniyab, S. T. (2010) Resilience And Perceived Stress: Predictors Of Life Satisfaction In The Students Of Success And Failure. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 5, 748-752.
- Alkhateeb, H. M. (2001). University students' conceptions of first-year mathematics. *Psychological Reports*, 89, 41-47
- Carmel L. Proctor P. Alex Linley John Maltby (2009) Youth Life Satisfaction: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10:583-630
- CIA World Factbook (2009). *Nigeria People*. [http://www.theodora.com/wfbcurrent/nigeria/nigeria\\_people.html](http://www.theodora.com/wfbcurrent/nigeria/nigeria_people.html) (Accessed January, 24, 2012).
- Corrigan, J. (2000). The Satisfaction With Life Scale. *The Center for Outcome Measurement in Brain Injury*. <http://www.tbims.org/combi/swls> (accessed March 9, 2010).
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 71-75.
- Diener, E. (1994). Assessing subjective well-being: Progress and opportunities. *Social Indicators Research*, 31, 103-157.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 276-302.
- Hui, C. H., & Triandis, H. C. (1985). Measurement in cross-cultural psychology: A review and
- comparison of strategies. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 16, 131-152.
- Köker, S. (1991). Normal ve Sorunlu Ergenlerin Yaşam Doyumu düzeylerinin Karşılaştırılması. Masters thesis, Ankara/Turkey: Ankara University.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Positive psychology, positive prevention, and positive therapy. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 3-9). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14.
- Wikipedia (2009). *Demographics of Nigeria*. [http://www.wikipedia.com/Demographics\\_of\\_Nigeria.htm](http://www.wikipedia.com/Demographics_of_Nigeria.htm). (Accessed January 24, 2012).