

# [Factors influencing psychological well being psychology essay](https://assignbuster.com/factors-influencing-psychological-well-being-psychology-essay/)

The theoretical framework used for this thesis provides a framework to discover factors influencing psychological well being as well as explains how psychological well being may rise, fall, or remain stable as people are getting older, and events accumulate. This theoretical framework has been developed based on the social production function theory, gerotranscendence theory, and Islamic core beliefs.

Since social production functions theory meets the basic requirements for a theory of successful ageing, is a useful theory to explain how elderly people pursue their psychological well-being and how they employ adaptive strategies to optimize it.

The social production function theory (SPF theory) was introduced by Lindenberg(Lindenberg, 1996; Ormel, Lindenberg, Steverink, & Vonkorff, 1997). The central view of SPF theory is that people are basically resourceful and try to reach ultimate goal of psychological well-being by optimizing outcomes within the constraints they are facing(Steverink, Lindenberg, & Ormel, 1998).

This theory states that people produce their psychological well being by trying to optimize achievement of universal goals, within the set of resources and constraints they face(Nieboer, Lindenberg, & Ormel, 1999). In this theory term “ resource” is considered as available means for production individual’s psychological well-being(Ormel, Lindenberg, Steverink, & Verbrugge, 1999). This theory explains how people produce their psychological well-being subject to resources and constraints, and how they employ adaptive strategies to optimize psychological well-being(Ormel et al., 1999).

SPF theory integrates strengths of relevant psychological theories and economic consumer-household production theories. This theory identifies two ultimate goals that all humans seek to optimize physical well-being and social well-being, and five instrumental goals by which they are achieved stimulation, comfort, status, behavioral confirmation, and affection. The core notion of SPF theory is that people choose and substitute instrumental goals so as to optimize the production of their well-being (Ormel, et al. 1999).

SPF theory basically combines a theory of human well being with a behavioral theory about how individuals use their resources in order to achieve well being. The basis for the theory of well being in SPF theory is a hierarchy of universal needs, instrumental goals and resources. ‘ Needs’ in this theory refer to a restricted set of basic, physical and social needs, which must be at least minimally fulfilled for a person to experience overall well being. The better the needs are fulfilled, the higher the individual’s psychological well being (Steverink, Lindenberg, & Slaets, 2005).

In Social production functions theory two universal goals are recognized: physical wellbeing and social well-being.

1- Physical well-being is attained by two instrumental goals: stimulation or activation and comfort. Stimulation refers to activities that produce arousal, including mental and sensory stimulation and physical effort. Comfort is a somatic and psychological state based on absence of thirst, hunger, pain, fatigue, fear, extreme unpredictability, and the like. Activation within the pleasant range, and comfort, are each related to physical well-being in a positive way.

2- Social well-being has been asserted as a vital universal goal. In SPF theory, social well-being is attained by three instrumental goals: status, behavioral confirmation, and affection. Status refers to relative ranking to other people, based mainly on control over scarce resources. Behavioral confirmation is the feeling one has done right in the eyes of relevant others, even when direct reinforcement does not occur. Affection includes love, friendship, and emotional support; it is provided in caring relationships. All three instrumental goals are assumed to have monotonic increasing relationships with social well-being, with decreasing marginal value for their production. In addition Simons (1983) distinguished three components of psychological need for social well-being in different terms: need for assistance and security, need for intimacy, and need for positive self-esteem. Inability to satisfy them results in, correspondingly, feelings of insecurity and anxiety, of isolation and loneliness, and of worthlessness and unfulfillment. Furthermore, Omodei and Wearing (1990) stated fundamental universal needs that are linked to well-being, such as self-esteem, personal control, purpose, and meaning (Ormel, et al. 1999).

In SPF theory, instrumental goals are substitutable depending on their relative cost. For example, if opportunities and resources for status achievement decrease, a person may increase production of affection and behavioral confirmation if that appears easier and cheaper than status production. Similarly, if someone becomes disabled and can no longer perform sports activities that offered stimulation, s/he may increase alternatives such as reading, watching television, and telephoning friends. The alternatives open to people who face dissatisfactions, losses, and dilemmas depend heavily on the extent and diversity of their resources. Variety tends to increase over one’s life, and high diversity gives not only richness to a current behavioral repertoire but also good chances of alternatives if a particular resource recedes.

## Characteristic features of SPF theory

SPF theory has several characteristic features.

The first characteristic is the hierarchical ordering of goals, with the ultimate goals at the top, and instrumental goals at lower levels, linked by production functions that specify the relationship between lower order and higher order goals. Thus, social production functions basically specify how well-being is produced for a particular category of individuals, for example elderly people. Three more kinds of means (resources) of production are sometimes distinguished, at the levels below of the five first-order goals, or first-order means of production (Lindenberg, 1996).

The second characteristic of SPF theory is the role of the relative price effect, i. e. the importance of substitution mechanisms. Instrumental goals are assumed to be substituted depending on their relative cost. For example, if opportunities for achievement of status are decreasing as often happens when ageing, a person is likely to increase the production of affection and behavioral confirmations if those are relatively easier and cheaper to produce.

A third important feature of SPF theory is that it provides opportunity to evaluate the ‘ efficiency’ of alternative production factors. In SPF theory, the most efficient means of production are multi-functional activities: those that combine production and investment and those that satisfy multiple higher order goals (Ormel et al. 1996). Thus, when comparing two alternative ways of producing e. g. stimulation (i. e. two substitutes), not just the expected output or benefits in terms of stimulation should be considered, but one must consider the cost-benefit ratio of the two, which includes not only the benefits in terms of stimulation, but also the costs and benefits of the alternatives in terms of comfort, status, behavioral confirmation and affection; and this not only for the immediate results but also in terms of the investment value.

Substitutability is an essential feature of SPF theory; this is one of the aspects of the theory which makes it also relevant form a sociological approach. For instance, in the most societies status is produced by occupations, and becomes relatively more costly to produce after retirement. Consequently, following retirement elderly will tend to substitute status by behavioral confirmation and affection. In addition, with increasing functional limitations by weakness, it also becomes more difficult to perform many roles that produce behavioral confirmation, sources of affection such as partner and grandchildren will become increasingly important to the elderly (Steverink, 1996). This is a faction that can not be predicted by Maslow’s hierarchy.

In this theory, older people substitute ways to achieve well-being when the available means change. For example, if their physical health deteriorates, increase their ties with loved ones to achieve their psychological well being. Based on this theory, it can be concluded that how elderly people can understand and maintain their psychological wellbeing over the life span.

The essential feature of SPF theory is that it combines a theory of individual behavior with a theory of goals, and is grounded in economic, sociological and psychological insights.

Figure below presents the schematic outline derived from SPF-theory. This schematic outline shows how psychological well being is produced. SPF-theory assumes the existence of a hierarchical structure in reaching the ultimate goal of psychological well-being, using different resources to fulfill instrumental goals and universal needs. SPF-theory states that if important goals are not met, due to lower levels of resources, people are not able to adequately fulfill goals such as status attainment, behavioral confirmation, comfort, and affection and will therefore attain less social well being, which eventually reduces people’s psychological well being.

Within social production function theory people try to use available resource to obtain social and physical well being and finally to achieve psychological well being. In other words, psychological well-being is a function of physical well-being and social well-being (Ormel et al., 1997).

According to SPF-theory, people strive actively towards fulfillment of hierarchically ordered goals. The ultimate goal people strive for is ‘ psychological well-being’. This top level goal is determined by people’s ability to obtain other universal goals: physical and social well-being. The fulfillment of all of these universal goals in turn depends on the obtainment of instrumental goals (e. g., internal and external comfort, stimulation, status, behavioural confirmation and affection). Instrumental goals are therefore means of production for the higher level goals. At the lowest level, people need resources to reach universal and instrumental goals. The amount of resources therefore offers possibilities or imposes constraints in the fulfilment of one’s goals. The term ‘ resources’ thereby refers to means of production of psychological well-being that are available to an individual (e. g. time, money, skills, education, social network, technologies) (Ormel et al. 1999, 62). So in the end, psychological well-being is determined by the amount of resources people have. Consequently, people with lower or diminishing resources will have more difficulties in trying to reach psychological well-being. If a person lacks the necessary resources or faces decreasing levels of resources, they may push the individual to a lower level of psychological well-being. Consequently, people with lower or diminishing resources may experience a lack of psychological well-being, i. e., mental illness. A lower level or loss of resources does not necessarily lead to unfulfilled higher level goals and consequently lowering psychological well-being. According to SPF-theory, people with lower or decreasing levels of resources may shift to alternative resources as these are substitutable. However, some type of resources lack the availability of good alternatives (Champion & Power 1995) or in some cases the losses are so severe that they surpass the ability to substitute, pushing the individual to a lower level of psychological well-being.

SPF-theory views humans as actively attaining their ultimate goal of psychological well being using different resources to fulfill instrumental goals and universal needs.

One of the most important and essential features of this theory, contrary to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, is the possibility of substitution and compensation in the fulfillment of different needs. This is one of the aspects of the theory which makes it relevant to study of psychological well being of elderly people. For instance, social well being as one of the most important determinants of psychological well being is largely produced by occupations and marriage. Consequently, following retirement and death of spouse/partner elderly try to achieve psychological well being by finding alternatives to compensate for losses(Bruggen, 2001).

In comparison with models about dynamics of psychological well-being, it can be concluded that SPF theory can provide a suitable framework for dealing with complex interactions between personal characteristics and environmental changes, that allows to develop specific hypotheses on the mechanisms through which personal characteristics and environmental changes influence psychological well being(Ormel et al., 1999).

As mentioned earlier, the basic assumptions of SPF theory shows how ageing individuals behave and adapt in the face of changing resources and constraints. SPF theory views process of ageing as a changing balance between gains and losses (in resources)(Steverink et al., 1998).

In line with SPF-theory, inability to achieve psychological well-being is related to decreasing levels of social and physical resources. As people age may experience a series of changes in their lives that involved a disturbance in their levels of resources. Hence, these decreasing resources may result in an inability to fulfill instrumental goals which consequently lead to lower level of psychological well-being. SPF-theory proposes that people will compensate for decreasing levels of resources by seeking additional resources or by substituting resources to improve or maintain their level of psychological well-being (Nieboer 1997; Ormel et al. 1997, 1999). This possibility of substituting or using alternative resources will lead to the fulfillment of universal needs and these resources will, ultimately, contribute to psychological well-being. According to SPF-theory, it can be stated that lower levels of resources may obstruct goals related to status attainment, affection, comfort and behavioral confirmation and may decrease physical and social well being, which in turn induces a lack of psychological well-being.

As mentioned earlier, according to social production function theory , people try to achieve their psychological well being by employ substitution factors and adaptive strategies when they face to some problem and decreased resources (Ormel et al., 1999).

In this study we used the social and personal religiosity as an adaptive strategy and buffering factor to optimize psychological well being.

Social production function theory is becoming a useful tool for understanding the processes of ageing(Steverink, Lindenberg, & Slaets, 2005) and a theoretical framework to guide gerontological studies in field of successful aging, psychological being, and quality of life (Bosmans et al., 2007; Elzen, 2006; Gerritsen, Steverink, Ooms, & Ribbe, 2004; Mathias & Martin, 2007; Meertens, Scheepers, & Tax, 2003; Nieboer et al., 1999; Ormel et al., 1997; von Faber et al., 2001).

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