

THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETING THEORIES IN EXPLAINING LIFE SATISFACTION

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relative importance of ten theories that are often used to explain life satisfaction. Data were collected by interviewing 439 adult shoppers in Bangkok. After factor analyses and reliability analyses were done with a multi-item measure, several multiple regression analyses were conducted. One main finding regarding the general public revealed that positive feeling, self-actualization, satisfaction with family life, having purpose in life, comparison of one's life with the previous year, and optimism were the most to the least positively correlated with life satisfaction. Moderation was the most negatively correlated with life satisfaction, followed by satisfaction with material possessions and flow. Comparison of one's life with the relevant others and comparison of one's life with what one desires was not seen to have any significant effect on life satisfaction.*

Keywords: *Life satisfaction, happiness, quality of life, well-being, theory.*

INTRODUCTION

Quality of life, either as measured through happiness or life satisfaction, is an ultimate goal of life that people seek. There are numerous theories and concepts that have attempted to explain happiness or life satisfaction. This study includes a popular traditional theory, namely, Maslow's self-actualization idea, and a newer theory, the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, as well as a well-adopted theory of the domains of life among several other theories, to explain life satisfaction. Specifically, it includes the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotion, the purpose of life theory, moderation philosophy, the theory of flow, comparison of one's life with the past, social comparison, comparison of one's life with what one desires, optimism, Maslow's idea of self-actualization, and the domains of life theory-namely, family life and material possessions. By and large, these theories and concepts have shown to have a positive significance in explaining happiness or life satisfaction, especially in the developed countries; however, their relative importance has rarely been illustrated. It is an attempt of this study to investigate this issues in a selected setting-Thailand-a developing country.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson 1998; Fredrickson and Cohn, 2008) suggests that positive emotions are comprised of the evolved adaptations build lasting resources. According to this theory, unlike negative emotions, which can narrow one's attention, cognition, and physiology in terms of coping with immediate threats or problems (Cosmides and Tooby 2000; Carver 2003), positive emotions produce thoughts and actions that range broadly and that are usually not critical to a person's safety, well-being, or survival. Thus positive emotions can be seen as predicting valued outcomes such as health, wealth, and longevity because they help build the resources that are necessary to achieve these desired goals. Evidence confirms in fact that positive emotions broaden the way we deal with the world since positive emotions have been seen to produce wider patterns of perception and creative thoughts and actions. Positive emotions also have been seen to result in the participation in more inclusive social groups and more flexible goals and attitudes (for reviews see Ashby, Isen, and Turken 1999; Fredrickson and Cohn 2008).

According to the broaden-and-build theory, then, momentary experiences of positive emotions for example fuel growth and change over time and help build our resources. In terms of this study, it refers to the skills required for identifying opportunities and "bouncing back" from adverse experiences. When a person experiences positive emotions and uses his or her resources to meet both life's challenges and opportunities, a more general, global satisfaction with life can result. Positive emotions then can be seen as an important element in the attainment of happiness (or subjective well-being, as Myers and Diener put it in 1995). Fredrickson (1998), in looking into the concept of positive emotions, realized that "joy" is an emotion that is often experienced while playing, and that it leads to what she termed "approaching behavior." Fredrickson perceived that through play, children build important physical, intellectual, and social abilities.

According to her, interest stimulates exploration, and this can be considered the basis of future knowledge and personal growth. Indeed, a feeling of contentment allows people to expand their world view and also their view of themselves, and this can later lead to building better social skills. Additionally, love according to Fredrickson can be defined as a combination of the three emotions of joy, interest, and feeling contentment, and when they are in close relationship, they can all be experienced. Positive emotions then, when seen in this way, can be hypothesized to be related to life satisfaction.

Purpose of Life

According to the recent theoretical and empirical literature, having a purpose in life contributes to optimal human development in many ways. For example, the theoretical research has identified purpose as an asset in a person's development (Benson 2006) and as an important element in human prosperity (Seligman 2002), and having a purpose in life according to empirical research can be associated with greater levels of happiness (French and Joseph 1999). Young people with a purpose have been perceived to be psychologically healthier than their peers (Shek 1993) and research suggests that the same is true for adults (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1967; Kish and Moddy 1989). Debats (1998) found that higher-purpose scores were negatively correlated to a significant degree with psychological distress. Purpose has also been viewed from the point of view of its ability to help a person overcome challenges in life.

The well-known psychologist Victor Frankl (1959) was one of the first psychologists to propose the idea that having a strong belief system, for example having a purpose in life, gives people the strength to withstand the hardships in life. In terms of youth, Erikson (1968) indicated that having a purpose in life helps young people deal with and resolve their identity "crises" in positive ways. Moreover, a strong sense of purpose under scores prosocial moral action and civic engagement. Further, higher scores on the purpose in life test have been seen to predict the ability to see the world outside the self-referential point of view (altruism) (Noblejas de la Flor 1997; Shek, Ma, and Cheung 1994) and to carry with it a positive effect (Noblejas de la Flor 1997). Empirical research additionally supports the idea that purpose and subjective well-being are significantly related. Ryff for example has shown that high scores on her purpose in life sub-scale were associated with a subjective sense of well-being (Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff 2002; Ryff and Keyes 1995). It can be hypothesized then that having a purpose of life is positively related to life satisfaction.

Moderation

In addition to having a purpose in life, moderation has been seen by both Buddhists and Aristotle, to cite two sources from entirely different contexts, as a key to happiness. Aristotle stated that "virtue... is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency." In other words, according to this view virtue lies between two extremes, suggesting that a virtuous person is a person that exhibits moderation in his or her behavior. Very much like Aristotle, Buddhists also recognize the value of moderation. Siddhartha as a prince grew up in a world of luxury and was for the early part of his life shielded from the pains and suffering beyond his home. When he finally went into the world to see for himself what it

was like, he discovered three things that disturbed him: people get old, get sick and they finally die. Each of these elements caused him to think deeply about the nature of pleasure, and eventually, he renounced all of his earthly possessions and set out on a life of complete poverty.

During that spiritual journey, he discovered the “Middle Way” of moderation, a principle that supported a balanced approach to life (Rahula 2014), correlative with Aristotle’s idea of the “golden mean” (Aristotle 2014). It can be said that at the heart of Buddhism is the idea of moderation. With reference to our personal economic activities, when their goal remains the satisfaction of desires, these activities can be seen as without end since desires themselves are endless. According to the Buddhist approach, economic activity must be directed to the attainment of our personal well-being rather than the maximum satisfaction of traditional economic thinking. Well-being in this sense then can act as a control on economic activity, and from this point of view we no longer struggle against each other to satisfy our endless desires.

On the contrary, our activities are directed toward the attainment of our well-being. Economic activity that is directed in this way is comprised of objectives that are clear and controlled, where an equilibrium is achieved, without excess, over consumption or over production. According to the classical economic model, unlimited desires are controlled by scarcity. However according to the Buddhist model, desires can be controlled through adherence to the ideas of moderation and well-being, and the balance that results from this attitude embodies the ability to eliminate the harmful effects of uncontrolled economic activity.

Traditionally, Buddhist monks and nuns reflect on the idea of moderation before each meal. The idea is to not eat food just for enjoyment or for taste but to maintain the body. In this sense, eating is simply for subduing the painful feelings of hunger. This does not mean that the goal of moderation is restricted to the monastic life. Indeed, whenever we use things such as food, paper, clothing, or even electricity, we can take the time to reflect on their true purpose rather than using them thoughtlessly. In thinking in this way we can avoid our tendency to consume without thinking and focus on what we really need or want: the middle way. In this way we can also see consumption as a means to the end of developing our potential. With such development as our goal, we eat food for example not simply for the pleasure that it provides but also in order to obtain the physical and mental energy necessary for our intellectual and spiritual growth and a life lived with greater nobility. It is hypothesized here then that moderation is positively related to life satisfaction.

Theory of Flow

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) has argued that happiness depends on whether a person is able to derive what he calls *flow* from what ever he or she does. Flow is considered to be an “autotelic and optimal experience,” and it includes the idea of being highly involved in what you are doing, with deep concentration, intrinsic motivation and the idea of having the personal skills to meet the challenges that one faces. To lead a happy life, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1999), it is important that one be able to find flow in activities that are complex; that is, activities that provide a potential for growth over one’s entire life span and that allow for new experience and stimulate the development of new skills (p. 826).

In Csikszentmihalyi’s work, flow is viewed as an ideal condition that is between boredom and anxiety and is typically described, according to him, in the following way: “Your concentration is very complete, your mind isn’t wandering, you are not thinking of something else; you are totally involved in what you are doing” (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, p. 39). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) in his study cited the following characteristics of flow experience:

1. the coming together of action and awareness,
2. concentrating on a limited stimulus field,
3. forgetting one self,
4. recovering clear and unambiguous feedback, and
5. having an “autotelic” nature, which means that the flow experience is an end in itself and does not depend on goals or rewards external to itself.

It can be hypothesized that when the flow conditions are met, people will tend to be more satisfied with their lives

Comparison of One’s Life with the Past

A number of theories have suggested that happiness is a result of a comparison between some standard and the actual conditions; if the actual conditions exceed that standard, then happiness will result. In terms of satisfaction, these comparisons may be conscious; however, in the case of affect, comparison with a standard may occur in a way that is less than fully conscious. For example, with reference to adaptation (Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman 1978) and the range-frequency theory (Parducci 1968, 1982), a person’s past life can be used to set the standard. If the individual’s current life experience exceeds this standard, then it is likely that that person will be happy. It can be hypothesized then that if one compares his or her present life with the past and it is found to be better, then the individual will tend to be satisfied with his/her life.

Comparison of One's Life with Relevant Others

According to the social comparison literature, life satisfaction appears to be a salient variable related to the orientation of comparing oneself with in the social context. Satisfaction with life is a cognitive dimension, one of "subjective well-being," and is equivalent conceptually to happiness. While the positive and negative emotions that constitute the affective side of one's person well-being can be favorable and unfavorable, the idea of being satisfied with one's life also includes cognitive evaluations (Diener and Suh 1997). When comparing one self with others in terms of particular behaviors is taken into consideration, it has been suggested that these comparisons may lead to emotions that can be interpreted as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

That is, people compare themselves to others and according to their comparison they may feel good or bad about the situation in which they find themselves, and in turn this dynamic can result in judgments concerning their life satisfaction. In other words, typically when people evaluate their own lives according to the standards that are socially set in a positive way, they will be satisfied with their lives and experience positive emotions. However, when this social-comparison process is negatively, negative emotions such as dissatisfaction, sadness, and anxiety may be experienced (Diener and Fujita 1997). It is hypothesized then that when a person compares him/herself with others and that comparison is found to be positive, he or she will be satisfied with his/her life.

Comparison of One's Life with What One Desires

According to the desire-satisfaction theory of welfare, a person's well-being can be considered in terms of his or her overall level desire-satisfaction in life, and according to this theory, we feel that our life is going well if we get what we want (Griffin 1986). That is, something is considered good for us only if it satisfies our desires (Shafer-Laudau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 39). In other words, the more you get what you want, the better is your life felt to be. Contrariwise, when you do not get what you want then your life is viewed negatively because your desires are frustrated. If this theory of welfare is accepted and we care about the welfare of others, then we should try to satisfy other people's desires.

The desire-satisfaction theory is egalitarian then in the sense that everyone's desires are considered equally important; no desire is more important than another because the desire theory rejects all forms of objective theories regarding welfare. Objective theories suggest that what contributes to a good life is independent of your desires and your opinions about what is important (Shafer-Laudau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 40) and they take into account the autonomy of the individual. It is important in terms of the desire-satisfaction theory that in order

to be good, people must have control over their lives and freedom of choice. It is hypothesized then that if an individual gets what he/she wants, he/she will be satisfied.

Optimism

Schweizer, Beck-Seyffer, and Schneider (1999) observed that optimism can influence an individual's sense of well-being. Indeed, it makes sense that there would be a close relationship between what a person expects of the future and how the person evaluates his or her life. Strassle, McKee, and Plant (1999) discussed the idea that optimism is positively correlated with "life satisfaction, positive physical and mental health, lower frequencies of mental disorders, and self-esteem" (p. 191), and Avia (1997) suggested that positive emotions are essential to a person's overall sense of well-being and that having a good mood, being optimistic, and satisfied with one's life are important aspects of a healthy personality. Marshall *et al.* (1992) suggested that optimism is highly associated with positive affect, and Peterson (2000) indicated that optimism is connected with having a good mood much of the time. Regarding the psychological or mental benefits of optimism, they have been found to mediate the effects of daily stress on women's feelings and their burnout as executives (Fry, 1995).

Burke, Joyner, Czech, and Wilson (2000) reported that optimists, as opposed to pessimists, tend to have better physical health, and Peterson (2000) cited several studies that reported a positive relationship between optimism and good health. In terms of the physical benefits of optimism, as a personality attribute optimism has been found to be a significant mediator of stress levels, as mentioned above. Scheier and Carver (1987) proposed that there is a causal link between optimism and physical health or well-being and that this may be due to the use of more effective coping strategies by optimists when dealing with stressful events. Other researchers have found that the chronically-stressed subjects were less optimistic than the controls and that both optimism and pessimism are "influenced by environmental circumstances and life experiences" (Robinson-Whelan, Kim, MacCallum, & Kiecolt-Glaser 1997, p. 1351). It can be hypothesized then that optimism is positively related to life satisfaction.

Family

Families are of course an essential aspect of society and are important to the individuals that make up the families. Because family relationships are strongly linked to a person's emotional well-being and health, the nature of the interactions within a family will greatly influence an individual's general sense of well-being. Sufficient levels of social support within families are thus essential to an

individual's happiness (Adams *et al.* 1996; North *et al.* 2008), and families that function well can have a significant impact on the individual's optimal performance and productivity, not to mention their well-being. Adams *et al.* (1996) reported that when individuals receive greater levels of emotional support from family members, they experience higher levels of life satisfaction.

Martinand Westerh of (2003), using data from a 1995 National Survey of Mid life Development in the U.S., reported that life satisfaction was higher among the individuals that believed that their family members truly cared for them and also among those that felt that they could rely on family members for serious personal problems. Lelkes (2006) found that persons living in house holds that had limited interaction with family or friends were less satisfied with their life than persons within house holds with stronger family ties. More over, Alesina and Giuliano (2010) analysed World Values Survey data and reported that people in countries with strong family ties were happier and more satisfied with life than those that did not have such close ties. It is hypothesized then that satisfaction with family life is positively related to life satisfaction.

Self-Actualization

According to Maslow, self-actualizing people perceive reality more accurately than those that are not self-actualized, and they have a sense of awe, wonder and gratitude about life. Rather than being self-centered, they are problem-centered and focus on how to improve themselves and not on their deficiencies. In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow called the bottom four levels "deficiency needs." He claimed that the lower needs, such as the need for food, safety, love, and esteem, are needs that humans cannot do without and that a deficiency in any of these interferes with a person's psychological health. If such a deficiency occurs, the person might, according to this line of thought, react defensively or irrationally because of a feeling of weakness rather than strength. In this way, one works to fill these needs—consciously or unconsciously, literally or symbolically.

However, it is important to note that Maslow viewed these as "needs" and necessities, but healthy people that have fulfilled these lower needs are able to act because of their desire to grow rather than being motivated by deficiencies. In other words, their deficiencies do not determine their actions; rather, they are motivated by growth and fulfillment. Again, according to Maslow, one is able to pursue what Maslow perceived as the universal human tendency to strive for growth, autonomy, identity, and the excellence of self-actualization if the person sees him/herself as possessing psychological well-being (Maslow, 1987, pp. 117-118). According to ideal theories (Nussbaum and Sen 1993), quality of life is

comprised of the realization of specific, explicitly-normative ideals as with the self-actualization of Maslow, and the people that have striven and attained the goal of self-actualization may be viewed as having attained the highest of quality of life (Kensenko, Sirgy, and Efraty 1990). It is hypothesized then that self-actualization is positively related to life satisfaction.

Material Possessions

Belk (1984, 1985) considers materialism as a collection of personality traits; that is, possessiveness, lack of generosity, and envy. Richins and Dawson (1992) on the other hand consider materialism as a central value that is associated with the belief that possessions mean success and lead to happiness. Materialism has been found to be an important predictor of the time a person spends on shopping and spending (Fitzmaurice and Comegys 2006) and has been seen to be positively related to the desire for unique consumer products (Lynn and Harris 1997), status consumption (Budiman and O' Cass 2007; Eastman *et al.* 1997; Heaney *et al.* 2005; Roberts 2000), and social consumption motivation (Fitzmaurice and Comegys 2006). This evidence suggests that materialists use goods to communicate information about themselves, and more specifically, they not only use goods to signal their status to others but also to conform to the norms of the group or to signal their identity. Possessions then can be used as an indicator of success, and individuals may judge their own and others' success according to the number and quality of possessions that they have accumulated.

Possessions are valuable to people that tend to be materialists in part because of their ability to confer status (Mason 1981) and to project the self-image that they desire (Campbell 1987). The inclination of people to define success in terms of possessions can be seen in Thai society of course, as Thais value "face." That is, they enjoy being admired and envied as superior beings. In fact, the idea of face is often determined in terms of the quantity and quality of material goods that one possesses, and among the Thais, the greater is the quantity of their possessions, and the greater their quality, the better is their public "face." For example, the enormously-expensive but prestigious Mercedes Benz automobile has good sale figures in Thailand, and Thai businesspeople favor Mercedes Benz because to them it symbolizes success and prestige and provides them with face or high status. Materialistic people then consider the possession of goods as an avenue to their personal happiness (Ahuvia and Wong 2002; Fournier and Richins 1991). It is hypothesized then that satisfaction with material possessions is positively related to life satisfaction.

METHOD

The questionnaire was first pretested with a group of 22 MBA students. Then, personal interviews were conducted with twenty-two randomly-sampled interviewees of at least 18 years of age. The questionnaire was assessed for its suitability, readability, and possible ambiguity and revised based on the feedback received from both groups.

Four hundred and thirty-nine eligible respondents were interviewed in twenty-two department stores and discount stores spread all over Bangkok. The response rate was 50%. The sample consisted of roughly an equal number of women and men (Table 1). The mean age was 34.2 years. Most of the interviewees (60.6%) were single, 35.1% were married. The majority of them were highly educated with at least a bachelor degree (69%). Most of them (77%) had a monthly household income of at least 35,000 Thai Baht (USD 972).

Measures

Almost all of the measures in this study were multi-item scales, except for self-actualization, comparison of one's life with the previous year, comparison of one's life with relevant others, and comparison of one's life with what one desires, which were the single-item scales. The measures of life satisfaction, satisfaction with family, and satisfaction with material possessions were taken from the study of Leelakulthanit, Day, and Walters (1991), and the measure of optimism was taken from Leelakulthanit and Hongcharu (2012). Other multi-item measures, namely, positive feeling, having purpose of life, moderation, and flow, were placed on seven-point Likert scales ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Table 1
Summary of the respondents' data

<i>Item</i>	<i>Details</i>
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>	
Gender	Female 51.7%, Male 48.3%
Age	Mean = 34.2 years old (Min 18, Max 83)
Marital status	60.6% single 35.1% married 4.4% others
Education	High school or lower = 18.8%, some college = 12.3% bachelor degree = 57.2%, advanced degree = 11.8%
Household income per month	34,999 Thai Baht (972 USD) or less = 23%, at least 35,000 Thai Baht = 77%
Employment status	76.6% employed, 15.8% students, 3.7% House wives, 2.5% retired and 1.4% unemployed

Generally, the underlying ideas of the measurement were derived from a previous literature review and the particular items of the scales were an adaptation of those ideas. Exploratory factor analyses were conducted on those multi-items, which were supposed to make up the unidimensional scales. For instance, positive feeling was measured using six items, namely, accumulation of happy moments, joy while playing, surrounding environment stimulates additional knowledge seeking, feeling satisfied with your wider view of self and the world, loving and being kind to others, and feeling proud of your self (Appendix 1). These six items were factor analyzed and extracted using principal component analysis. It was found that these six items loaded high on the positive feeling factor. Then, the reliability of this unidimensional scale was assessed. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 showed that the positive feeling construct was highly reliable. Like wise, other multi-item scales went through similar processes. It was found that they were all unidimensional from the first factor analysis, except for moderation, which was first split into two factors. When the item of regretting after buying the products was dropped because it was the only item that loaded high on the second factor, the item "you are often in financially "broke" situation" still loaded high on both factors.

Therefore, this item was dropped. Eventually, the remaining six items were unidimensional. It should be noted that before doing the factor analysis of moderation, two items, which were you are often in a broke situation and regretting after buying products, were recoded in the reverse order so that the items would be in the same direction with other items that measured moderation. Purpose of life, moderation, flow, optimism, satisfaction with family, and satisfaction with material possessions all exhibited high reliability, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.88, 0.74, 0.66, 0.80, 0.82, and 0.89 respectively.

Data Analysis

In order to assess the impact of each the oretical construct on life satisfaction, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Specifically, positive feeling, purpose in life, moderation, flow, comparison of one's life with the previous year, comparison of one's life with others, comparison of one's life with what one desires, optimism, family life, self-actualization, material possession, gender, age, marital status, education, and house hold income were regressed on life satisfaction. It is note worthy that the demographic variables, namely, gender, age, marital status, education, and house hold income, were used as the independent variables along with other the oretical constructs because they should be used as the controlled variables.

Results and Discussion

It was found that positive feeling, having purpose in life, favorable comparison of one's life with the previous year, optimism, satisfaction with family life, and self-actualization had positive impacts on life satisfaction (Table 2). In addition, moderation, flow, and satisfaction.

With material possessions had negative influences on life satisfaction. Further more, comparison of one's life with others and comparison of one's life with what one desires had no impact on life satisfaction. Older people were found to be more satisfied with their lives than younger individuals. Like wise, the higher house hold income segment or those with a monthly house hold income of at least 35,000 Baht (972 USD) was found to be more satisfied with their lives than the lower house hold income segment. The rank order of the impacts from the most influential to the least influential was as follows: the impacts showing the

Table 2
Results of the multiple regression analysis of life satisfaction regarding the various theoretical constructs and demographic variables

	Unstandardized		Standardized		t	Sig.	Collinearity	
	Coefficients		Coefficients				Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std.Error	Beta					
(Constant)	1.334	.377			3.540	.000		
Positive-feel	.350	.074	.246		4.742	.000**	.445	2.247
Purpose	.194	.058	.163		3.345	.001**	.503	1.988
Moderate	-.134	.053	-.102		-2.523	.012**	.727	1.375
Flow	-.120	.061	-.085		-1.9562	.051*	.635	1.574
Current life is better than previous year	.114	.041	.129		.808	.005**	.569	1.756
Your life is better than others	-.020	.044	-.021		-.458	.647	.567	1.764
You achieved what you desired in the past year	.021	.043	.025		.4972	.619	.477	2.095
Optimist	.154	.060	.126		.5803	.010**	.503	1.989
Fam	.240	.063	.195		.8184	.000**	.459	2.178
Self-actualization	.214	.045	.228		.748	.000**	.518	1.930
Mat	-.115	.061	-.097		-1.889	.060*	.455	2.197
gender	-.097	.074	-.047		-1.308	.192	.936	1.068
Age	-.007	.004	-.088		-1.979	.048**	.603	1.658
Marygroup	.026	.095	.012		.275	.783	.616	1.625
Educgroup	.055	.085	.024		.643	.521	.862	1.160
Incgroup	-.163	.092	-.065		-1.772	.077*	.887	1.128

$R^2 = .522$ $\bar{R}^2 = .502$ $F_{16,399} = 27.182$ $P = .000$ * = Significant at $\alpha \leq .1$ ** = Significant at $\alpha \leq .05$

strongest impact were positive feeling, followed by self-actualization, satisfaction with family life, having a purpose in life, a favorable comparison of one's life with the previous year, optimism, moderation, satisfaction with material possessions, and flow.

The out standing significance of impacts tended to belong to positive feeling, self-actualization, and satisfaction with family life, with standardized coefficients of around 0.2. The rest of the impacts ranged from $-.09$ to 0.16 . Within the country, it was found that the people that had a house hold income of at least 35,000 Baht/month were more satisfied with their lives than people with a lower house hold income. Further information was obtained concerning the significance and relative impacts of various theories on life satisfaction. Two additional similar regression analyses were conducted for the lower house hold income group and the higher house hold income group. It was found that among the lower house hold income persons, only positive feeling exerted a significant impact on life satisfaction.

Table 3. For the poor, feeling good-namely, having happy moments, experiencing joy while playing, additional knowledge seeking because of the stimulation from the surrounding environment, satisfaction with one's wider view of the world, loving and being kind to others, and feeling proud of one self-was the only construct that had a positive impact on life satisfaction. That is to say, among the numerous theories, the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotion was the only theory that could explain life satisfaction for the lower house hold income group. The multiple regression results suggested that self-actualization, positive feeling, satisfaction with family, having a purpose in life, optimism, and comparing one's life with the previous year had positive impacts on the life satisfaction of the higher house hold income group (Table 4). Contrarily, satisfaction with material possessions and moderation had negative influences on the life satisfaction of this group. In addition, flow, comparison of one's life with others, and comparison of one's life with what one desires had no impacts on the life satisfaction of this group. To see the relative importance of the impact of various theories, the standardized beta coefficients of the constructs derived from these theories were rank ordered. It was found that the most important construct was self-actualization, followed by positive feeling, satisfaction with family, having a purpose in life, optimism, satisfaction with material possessions, comparison of one's life with the previous year, and moderation. The major influencers of life satisfaction tended to be self-actualization, positive feeling, and satisfaction with family, which had standardized beta coefficients of at least 0.2.

Table 3
Results of the multiple regression analysis of life satisfaction regarding the various theoretical constructs and demographic variables in the low house hold income group

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.739	.832		.888	.377		
Positive-feel	.800	.207	.481	3.856	.000**	.388	2.577
Purpose	.081	.125	.070	.650	.517	.517	1.936
Moderate	-.209	.141	-.148	-1.479	.143	.606	1.651
Flow	-.188	.172	-.128	-1.091	.279	.438	2.285
Current life is better than previous year	.138	.121	.132	1.146	.255	.458	2.183
Your life is better than others	-.064	.116	-.060	-.556	.580	.513	1.949
You acheived what you desired in the past year	.024	.097	.029	.2501	.803	.458	2.183
Optimist	.179	.161	.139	.1091	.271	.385	2.597
Fam	.178	.177	.140	.006	.318	.312	3.208
Self-actualization	.089	.116	.095	.765	.446	.390	2.567
Mat	.063	.133	.057	.471	.639	.420	2.382
Gender	.080	.185	.036	.433	.666	.861	1.161
Age	-.008	.008	-.086	-.955	.343	.750	1.333
Marygroup	-.057	.202	-.026	-.282	.779	.706	1.416
Educgroup	-.053	.187	-.024	-.282	.779	.815	1.227

$R^2 = .547$ $\bar{R}^2 = .456$ $F_{15,75} = 6.027$ $P = .000$ ** = Significant at $\alpha \leq .05$

In contrast to the theories, the results suggested that flow, moderation, and satisfaction with material possessions were negatively correlated with life satisfaction. Contrary to the theory of flow, people were not always happy because what they did matched their capabilities. It might be rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of them that would make them happy. In addition, it was found that moderation makes the lives of Thai people miserable. Thais tend to enjoy spending because buying things, especially expensive products or prestigious brands, is likely to indicate success in their lives and symbolize status which gives "face" to the those that possess the products. Material possessions cannot be an end in themselves in making people happy. This may be because people always want more once they achieve what they have. Material possessions as a reflection of people's success might not lead to ones' happiness; it is people's pride in their success or job well done that is likely to trigger life satisfaction. The value of material possessions should lie in their function and as

Table 4
Results of the multiple regression analysis of life satisfaction regarding the various theoretical constructs and demographic variables in the high house hold income group

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.901	.401		2.249	.025		
Positive-feel Purpose	.285	.079	.210	3.606	.000**	.452	2.213
Moderate Flow	.213	.068	.179	3.141	.002**	.470	2.127
Current life is better than previous year	-.140	.059	-.111	-2.373	.018**	.696	1.436
Your life is better than others	-.090	.067	-.064	-1.338	.182	.669	1.494
You achieved what you desired in the past year	.102	.043	.121	2.343	.020**	.568	1.759
Optimist	-.030	.048	-.033	-.620	.536	.551	1.816
Fam	.016	.049	.019	.333	.739	.460	2.172
Self-actualization	.160	.065	.134	2.459	.014**	.512	1.954
Mat	.245	.068	.201	3.600	.000**	.488	2.047
Gender	.254	.050	.273	5.105	.000**	.534	1.874
Age	-.158	.071	-.129	-2.242	.026**	.458	2.183
Marygroup	-.126	.081	-.062	-1.549	.122	.943	1.060
Educgroup	-.006	.004	-.073	-1.361	.175	.524	1.907
	.080	.111	.038	.7181	.473	.559	1.790
	.113	.099	.048	.145	.253	.884	1.131

$R^2 = .528$ $\bar{R}^2 = .505$ $F_{15,309} = 23.041$ $P = .000$ ** = Significant at $\alpha \leq .05$

positive emotional stimulants. When people seek material possessions, they may end up working much harder for extra money in order to buy bigger houses or cars and forgo the possibility of spending more time with their families, which might make their lives much happier.

CONCLUSION

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions seems to be the theory at the top rank regarding its positive impact on life satisfaction. It can also explain the life satisfaction of various groups well including the general public, the lower house hold income group, as well as the higher house hold income group. In addition, explaining life satisfaction through the domains of life concept, including using self-actualization as the only measurement of self-domain and satisfaction of family, tends to work well. More over, to be more satisfied with one's life, people should be able to be proud of them selves, especially when they attain their life goals. Further, they should also be happy with their own families.

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