Indigenising positive psychology in the
'Handbook of Quality of Life in African Societies'
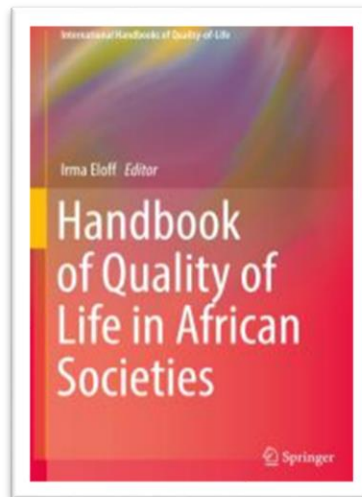
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Book review

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Abstract: This *book review* highlights the main themes of the *Handbook of Quality of Life in African Societies* (as edited by Prof Irma Eloff from the University of Pretoria), focusing on meaning and language, culture (and positive culture), and social responsibility. The interrelatedness of all five parts of the book (from a macro, meso and micro perspective) are discussed with specific mention of *Ubuntu* and its relevance in investigating the phenomenon of quality-of-life. The review emphasises the need for exploratory and indigenous research in communities where social association is of immense importance and to contextualise quality-of-life from this perspective. This book is recommended for scholars who wishes to utilise indigenous methodologies and to deeper understand the diverse influences and social impact on the quality-of-life of individuals south of the Sub-Saharan Africa.

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1. Introduction

Quality-of-life has been an important field within positive psychology for decades for social scientists (Panzini et al., 2017). The premise is quite subjective (Michalos, 2003) since it depends on many factors, amongst others the social context, emotional management, and the self-and social awareness of the individual. The *Handbook of Quality of Life in African Societies* (as edited by Prof Irma Eloff from the University of Pretoria) provides various scholarship approaches in understanding well-being and quality-of-life in societies south of the Sub-Saharan Africa. The book is divided into five parts (social context, environment and technology, health, education, and family) each with unique chapters that provide original information on quality-of-life in diverse spheres of life. These diverse spheres can be further divided into macro (eg environment), meso (eg culture, community, family), and micro (individual) perspectives. From a macro perspective, globalisation and its impact on different societies are explored. From a meso perspective, the essential need for social cohesion and building communities are highlighted. From a micro perspective, an individual's health, language, culture, and education are prominently discussed and how it relates to the macro and meso world.

As evident from the different parts of the book and the various perspectives, this handbook brought forth a holistic view of quality-of-life in this specific context. Important to note, these parts and perspectives are not logically ordered in the book, and the reason for that is quite clear when reviewing the book further and supporting the notion of interconnectedness. This book highlighted the importance to contextualised information, and to provide indigenous, and original scholarship to fully understand a phenomenon in a specific context from various angles. This may be the biggest strength of the handbook where this type of research was never done before on such a collective scale with scholars from different regions. Various methodologies were utilised which strengthen the substance of the scholar work done on quality-of-life. Although the methodologies are exploratory in nature, it made sense since the book wished to share new denotation and showcase significant contextualised insight on well-being and quality-of-life.

2. Main themes of handbook

During the review, various themes came forth, but some broader, consistent themes were evident throughout the book. The use of language and understanding terminology is well explored and the real meaning of well-being and quality-of-life is investigated throughout the five parts of the book. This is so vital in societies where Westernised influence distorted the authentic understanding of these phenomenon in different spheres of life in Africa. In some

parts of the book (more specifically Part 4: Education), the significance of language is seen as vital for societies to achieve quality-of-life, where the focus is on multilingual ability. Well-being is attached to communication ability, and authentic interaction in these societies. This provides an exclusive take on how language and meaning plays a vital role in not only understanding the phenomenon but also how it is embedded in different contexts.

Another consistent theme is the importance of culture when dealing with own health, family, and own successes and to redirect focus on positive cultural identity which is seen as essential to achieve success in all social spheres of life. Although the first part of the book (Part 1) focused solely on the social context, culture and community, this commodity is evident in all the other parts of the book when discussing the influence of technology, dealing with health issues, teaching, and family matters.

A further consistent theme throughout the five parts is social responsibility and how it is deeply engraved in all activities and the attachment to appropriate social conduct. This highlights how social interest and relations are put in front of self-interest to sustain well-being and quality-of-life in this specific society. From above it is quite evident that the book captured various elements of individuals and attach strong association on interrelations and connectedness.

In Africa, the premise of the indigenous ideology labelled as Ubuntu (Gaim & Clegg, 2021) demonstrates the manner societies relate and connect with each other and focus more on the collective purpose of a community. All social and individual aspects of a person are intertwined to focus on community interest and to leave the self-interest behind.

This book encapsulates the essence of Ubuntu and its importance for quality-of-life throughout the five parts of the book which further emphasise the importance of relational harmony in achieving the full potential of well-being and quality-of-life.

3. Conclusion

This book captured the heart of quality-of-life in the south of Sub-Saharan Africa. It provided scholars with a deeper awareness of the importance of contextualised, authentic, and original knowledge to create social understanding and shared responsibility. This new knowledge also assists in optimising well-being and quality-of-life as a community purpose and social responsibility initiative. This book is recommended for scholars who are focused on indigenising their research approaches. This book provides the reader insight from various angles (macro, meso, and micro) and support the notion of interconnectedness when exploring positive psychology aspects in diverse societies.

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