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## Soft Life vs. Hard Life Mentality: Different Psychological Perspectives on Seeking Happiness

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### ABSTRACT

The concepts of Soft Life and Hard Life are two approaches to life that are gaining increasing attention in contemporary psychology, particularly in relation to the search for happiness, meaning in life, and psychological well-being. The Soft Life Mentality focuses on comfort, luxury, and stress avoidance, which in the short term can increase emotional calm and reduce anxiety. However, if overly dominated by a comfort orientation, this lifestyle risks creating a sense of emptiness and a loss of deeper meaning in life. In contrast, the Hard Life Mentality emphasizes struggle, perseverance, and hard work as the path to significant achievement. This approach often produces a more lasting sense of satisfaction and eudaimonic happiness, but also carries the risk of stress, burnout, and physical and mental health disorders if not balanced with self-healing. This study used qualitative methods with literature analysis of various academic sources regarding the relationship between these two mentalities and quality of life, coping mechanisms, and theories of hedonic and eudaimonic happiness. The results indicate that a balance between Soft Life and Hard Life is key to achieving more holistic happiness. Integrating the two not only improves an individual's emotional well-being but also strengthens social relationships and builds a foundation for more sustainable, long-term happiness..

**Keyword:** Soft Life, Hard Life, Mentality, Happiness, Psychology, Well-being, Quality of Life.

### INTRODUCTION

The concepts of Soft Life and Hard Life have attracted considerable attention in contemporary psychology, particularly in relation to how individuals seek happiness and meaning in life. These two mentalities represent two very different approaches to life, which not only influence mindsets but can also impact psychological well-being, stress levels, and overall quality of life. In today's fast-paced and challenging world, how one chooses to live their life whether focusing on comfort and luxury or pursuing a path of hard work and resilience can have a significant impact on their life satisfaction.



Soft Life refers to a more relaxed lifestyle, where individuals seek happiness and fulfillment in comfort, luxury, and stress avoidance. This approach is often associated with a lifestyle that prioritizes pleasure, convenience, and instant gratification (Oishi & Westgate, 2022). In the modern social and cultural context, Soft Life has become increasingly popular among younger generations, particularly with the rise of social media trends that emphasize a glamorous and stress-free lifestyle. This concept encompasses the pursuit of happiness through luxury goods, lavish vacation experiences, and the avoidance of hardships and struggles perceived as exhausting (Shafiee & Hashemian, 2023). Psychologically, this mentality can offer a sense of security, comfort, and reduced anxiety. However, in the long term, the pursuit of happiness through comfort can leave individuals feeling empty or dissatisfied if not balanced with more substantial and meaningful achievements.

On the other hand, the Hard Life approach emphasizes the importance of hard work, resilience, and sacrifice. This mindset believes that true happiness can be achieved through achievement and hard work. People who adopt a Hard Life mentality tend to view life as a journey full of challenges and hardships that must be overcome with perseverance, discipline, and sacrifice. In this view, happiness is achieved through achieving major goals after overcoming obstacles and hardships. While this approach can encourage individuals to become more resilient, independent, and achieve significant results in life, it can also increase stress and anxiety levels if there is no balance between hard work and self-recovery (Cobo- Rendó, 2020). This mentality often risks leading to burnout, depression, or a feeling of being trapped in an endless cycle of work without time to enjoy life (Cabanas & Illouz, 2019).

This article aims to delve deeper into these two mentalities from a psychological perspective by analyzing their impact on emotional well-being, quality of life, and the achievement of long-term happiness. Through a literature analysis approach, this article will explore how Soft Life and Hard Life influence how individuals respond to stress, how they manage their expectations about life, and how these two mentalities relate to the fulfillment of basic psychological needs such as safety, self-control, and self-worth.

From a psychological perspective, the Soft Life is often viewed as a way to reduce excessive anxiety and stress by providing a comfortable and supportive environment (Robbani & Nafisatuzzahra, 2024). This can improve short-term well-being and give individuals a sense of peace and tranquility. However, if overly focused on comfort, individuals adopting this mentality may feel a loss of deeper purpose in life, which can lead to boredom or deep dissatisfaction. Conversely, the Hard Life can produce a deeper sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, as individuals feel they have struggled and overcome challenges (Siraj, 2018). However, a reliance on struggle and sacrifice can lead to chronic anxiety, high levels of stress, or even feelings of isolation if there is no opportunity to rest and enjoy the fruits of one's labor.

By combining these two mindsets, this article will also discuss how a balance between Soft Life and Hard Life can help individuals achieve more holistic happiness. Within the context of happiness psychology, theories such as hedonic wellbeing and eudaimonic wellbeing will be used to analyze how comfort and achievement can contribute to life satisfaction and broader emotional well-being. While hedonic wellbeing emphasizes enjoyment and comfort in life, eudaimonic wellbeing focuses on achieving meaning and purpose in life (Arsini & Dini, 2023). A balance between the two will help individuals achieve more lasting and meaningful happiness.

Overall, this article aims to provide deeper insight into how these two seemingly opposing mentalities Soft Life and Hard Life affect the achievement of happiness and psychological well-being (Zulkarnain & Damara, 2019). By exploring these two approaches, it is hoped that readers will gain a better understanding of how different lifestyles influence how we manage stress, happiness, and overall quality of life..

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative method with a literature analysis approach. Data were collected through a review of various academic journals, psychology articles, and books discussing life mentalities and happiness. This analysis focused on comparing the Soft Life and Hard Life mentalities and how they affect psychological well-being, stress levels, and life satisfaction. Relevant sources also included studies on coping mechanisms, psychological resilience, and theories of motivation and the pursuit of happiness.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The Soft Life Mentality represents a lifestyle paradigm focused on comfort, tranquility, and the avoidance of various forms of stress and pressure. Individuals with this mentality typically prefer less demanding jobs or activities, thus maintaining emotional balance and mental health. This orientation is often manifested in the choice of a simple but comfortable lifestyle, or conversely, one filled with symbols of luxury that are believed to enhance social status and self-confidence. They often seek happiness through access to facilities that instantly improve their quality of life, such as traveling to exclusive destinations, engaging in regular self-care, and consuming premium goods that are associated with happiness.

From a positive psychology perspective, a Soft Life can significantly impact short-term well-being. Individuals feel more relaxed, satisfied, and free from excessive external pressures, enabling them to navigate daily life with lower levels of anxiety. This concept aligns with the importance of self-compassion and stress management in maintaining psychological stability in today's fast-paced world. By providing space for rest, recovery, and self-fulfillment, individuals who engage in a Soft Life can avoid the emotional exhaustion that often occurs in societies with high work rates.

However, motivational psychology emphasizes that if happiness is based solely on comfort and luxury, individuals can be susceptible to the hedonic treadmill phenomenon. This condition describes a cycle in which emotional satisfaction quickly disappears once an individual becomes accustomed to a certain level of comfort, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and a continued search for new experiences to fill the void. Reliance on the pursuit of instant gratification can also diminish intrinsic motivation to achieve more meaningful things, such as self-actualization, social contribution, or achieving long-term goals. Therefore, without a balance of valuable achievements, the Soft Life has the potential to create feelings of emptiness, boredom, and even a crisis of meaning in life in the long term.

The Soft Life Mentality phenomenon is also inextricably linked to the current socio-cultural context. Lifestyle trends that emphasize comfort are heavily influenced by social media, where individuals are exposed to images of luxury that are often unrealistic. This can create false standards of happiness and encourage consumer behavior, so that happiness is perceived more as something to be displayed, rather than truly experienced.

In the long term, this can trigger feelings of low self-esteem or unhealthy social comparisons, particularly among younger age groups.

From a developmental psychology perspective, the Soft Life Mentality also has the potential to influence an individual's character development and life skills. If comfort is always the primary goal, individuals may be less prepared to deal with challenges or difficulties. However, the experience of overcoming obstacles is a crucial part of the process of building resilience and self-identity. When faced with stressful situations, individuals with a dominant Soft Life mentality may feel overwhelmed because they are not accustomed to dealing with uncertainty or risk.

However, it cannot be denied that Soft Life still plays a crucial role in maintaining psychological balance (Meliana & Sahrani, 2024). In today's fast-paced and stressful modern era, a lifestyle that emphasizes self-care, adequate rest, and the pursuit of comfort can help reduce the risk of mental health disorders. In other words, Soft Life can serve as a healthy coping strategy, provided it is implemented proportionately and does not negate the need for meaningful achievement. Integrating comfort with life's struggles is key to ensuring that Soft Life does not lead to psychological emptiness but instead contributes to a more complete sense of happiness.

The Hard Life Mentality emphasizes the values of struggle, perseverance, and mental resilience in the face of adversity. This mentality is generally associated with individuals with a long-term goal orientation, where challenges, sacrifices, and even failure are seen as essential components of the path to success. Those who adopt this mindset tend to have high levels of resilience and view every difficult experience as an opportunity for growth and development (Lubis, 2024).

Psychologically, this approach aligns with the theory of eudaimonic well-being, which emphasizes that happiness stems from achieving meaning and purpose in life. Success achieved through hard work often results in deeper and more lasting inner satisfaction. However, the downsides include high levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, and the risk of burnout. Without adequate coping strategies, individuals who focus too much on the Hard Life can lose their balance, even sacrificing physical health and social relationships.

The Hard Life Mentality also reflects certain cultural values that emphasize the importance of hard work as a path to success. In societies that value meritocracy, this mentality is often considered the ideal norm, where success is seen as the result of relentless effort. This can provide a powerful motivation for individuals to develop their own competencies, overcome obstacles, and achieve greater goals. However, the demand for continuous effort can also create excessive social pressure, especially when individuals feel unable to meet existing standards.

From a health psychology perspective, the Hard Life Mentality carries ambivalent implications. On the one hand, hard work and perseverance can strengthen the immune system and increase a sense of control over life. However, a lifestyle oriented toward extreme productivity often neglects basic needs such as rest, nutrition, and time for social relationships. This imbalance can trigger mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, as well as physical disorders like chronic fatigue. Therefore, it is important for individuals with a Hard Life mentality to find healthy coping strategies to avoid becoming trapped in a cycle of relentless work.

Furthermore, the Hard Life Mentality is also related to the achievement of self-identity and the concept of self-efficacy (Sun et al., 2025). Individuals who successfully overcome difficulties through hard work tend to have a stronger sense of confidence in

their ability to control their lives (Braaten et al., 2019). This has a positive impact on long-term psychological well-being because success achieved through struggle has deep emotional value. However, this well-being will be more optimal if balanced with flexibility, namely the ability to recognize one's limits and make room for recovery. Thus, the Hard Life Mentality can be a source of sustainable happiness when practiced with the right balance.

In contrast, the Hard Life Mentality emphasizes the values of struggle, perseverance, and mental resilience in the face of adversity. This mentality is generally associated with individuals with a long-term goal orientation, where challenges, sacrifices, and even failure are seen as essential components of the path to success. Those who adopt this mindset tend to have high levels of resilience and view every difficult experience as an opportunity for growth and development (Liu & Ngai, 2020).

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The psychology of happiness also emphasizes the importance of psychological flexibility in balancing these two orientations. Individuals who are able to adapt to situational needs when to rest and enjoy comfort, and when to strive hard to achieve goals—tend to have higher levels of well-being. This flexibility helps individuals avoid falling into extreme thought patterns, either focusing too much on short-term pleasure or being too caught up in the pressure to achieve.

Furthermore, research in positive psychology shows that the combination of hedonistic and eudaimonic aspects can strengthen social relationships, a key predictor of happiness (Anderson & Fowers, 2020; Gentzler et al., 2021). Enjoying the comfort of being with others (Soft Life) can strengthen emotional bonds, while shared struggles and achievements (Hard Life) foster a sense of togetherness and solidarity (Maricchiolo et al., 2021). Thus, the integration of these two models is not only beneficial at the individual level but also contributes to collective happiness within a community.

Furthermore, the psychology of happiness emphasizes that the balance between the Soft Life and the Hard Life helps individuals find authentic meaning in life. Hedonia provides energy and freshness to face routines, while eudaimonia provides a deeper sense of direction and purpose. When the two are harmoniously intertwined, individuals are able not only to enjoy life in the present but also to build a more sustainable foundation for long-term happiness. In other words, integrating these two orientations is a crucial strategy for achieving flourishing, the optimal state in which a person can fully develop emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

## CONCLUSIONS

Both the Soft Life and Hard Life mentalities have different impacts on an individual's well-being. While the Soft Life offers comfort and stress avoidance, it may not provide long-term fulfillment if not balanced with meaningful goals and accomplishments. Conversely, the Hard Life can help individuals achieve happiness through achievement and resilience, but it can also lead to stress and burnout if excessive. Therefore, it is important for individuals to find a balance between the two approaches so

they can achieve more lasting happiness and a more balanced well-being. A healthy mentality combines elements of both approaches, allowing one to enjoy comfort while remaining focused on achieving meaningful goals in life.

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