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Assessing Durban Car Guards' Happiness in 2019 and 2023 using The Short Form Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

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Abstract

This study examined the subjective well-being (SWB) of 83 Durban car-guards in 2019 (n = 45) and 2023 (n = 38) using the Short Form Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ-SF) concurrently with a qualitative survey, examining pre-defined themes affecting SWB, at both ticketed and free-parking sites. Quantile regression and related statistical analysis identified age squared (U-shaped and lowest at ~40.08 years ($p < 0.10$), and primary or incomplete secondary education correlating with higher SWB than further education ($p < 0.10$), possibly due to unrealized opportunities. Having a partner, living alone or sharing accommodation reduces SWB, in addition, 57.9% compared to 30% of car-guards reported "being single" in 2023 compared to 2019, possibly due to the stresses of survivalism. Working at beachfront or free parking sites increased SWB, due to no daily bay fees, while religious affiliations also increased SWB, while daily earning alone had no effect on SWB. Mental alertness, good time management and finding beauty all contributed to increased SWB. Many migrant car guards, despite past hardships, displayed higher resilience and SWB. Overall, there was a decline in SWB from 2019 to 2023, due to harsh informal sector socioeconomics. There is an urgent need to better assist informal workers.

Keywords: Car-guards, Informal Sector, Subjective Wellbeing, Socioeconomics, Durban, South Africa