

Occupation as a factor of personality subjective well-being

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This article examines personality subjective well-being and describes its psychological structure, general components and characteristics. An overview of foreign theories and studies on subjective well-being is presented. Correlations among related concepts such as happiness, life satisfaction and subjective well-being are also described. Subjective well-being is seen as a multivariate construction of a stable nature in mobile equilibrium. It is argued that a type of professional activity can have great importance and a positive impact on an individual's social life, health, identity shaping and psychological wellness. This article's findings are substantiated by the survey administered to 2229 respondents divided into groups according to their area of business: students, psychologists, doctors, teachers, engineering and technical staff, representatives of service industries, workers, military men, and prisoners. The descriptors identified two types of natures: positive, directed to a person's inner world (happy, lucky, optimistic) and to the outer world (trustworthy, competent, successful), and negative (pessimistic, unhappy, envious). This division of nature type was categorized according to the participants' subjective well-being index. Empirical evidence has shown that occupational specificity influences a person's subjective well-being. A substantial difference was found in subjective well-being index of the respondents. A higher index is typical of students and military men. Educators and industrial intelligentsia also demonstrate an increased level of subjective well-being, whereas prisoners tend to have a low level of subjective well-being. The same low index is characteristic of servicing trade representatives and psychologists.

Key words: personality, subjective well-being, life satisfaction, psychological security.

Introduction

Subjective well-being is an important issue in social development because experience of one's own personal well-being is a prerequisite for the person's successful functioning in society.

Two traditions that contributed to the growth of interest in the phenomenon of psychological well-being should be highlighted:

- Hedonistic tradition, which focuses on such constructs as pleasure, happiness, positive impact and life satisfaction (N.M. Bradburn, E. Diener, D. Kahneman, E. Diener, N. Schwarz, S. Lyubomirsky, H.S. Lepper);
- Eudaemonism, which considers human longing for happiness to be fundamental in his behavior (C.R. Rogers, C.D. Ryff, A.S. Waterman).

Following these traditions, there exist two perspectives that analyze the phenomenon of psychological well-being from various angles (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). The first perspective is based on the eudemonistic approach (Ruff & Keyes, 1995), which considers well-being to be the ultimate goal of human existence and functioning. The second stance that originates in the hedonistic approach relates to subjective well-being theory, also known as the theory of emotional well-being suggested by E. Diener and his colleagues (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). They suppose that people's assessments of their own lives reflect the very nature of well-being. Despite these differences in approaches, there is a general agreement that well-being is a multi-variant construct (E. Diener, S. Abdallah, S. Thompson, J. Michaelson, N. Marks & N. Steuer, J. Stiglitz, A. Sen & J. Fitoussi).

Psychological well-being possesses three determinative features.

The first feature is subjectivity (Diener, 1994; Parducci, 1995). In other words, people are happy if they consider themselves to be happy.

Second, well-being comprises emotional states (i.e., psychologically secure people are likely to experience positive emotions such as happiness and joy and are unlikely to have negative emotions such as sadness and anger) (Argyle, 1987; Diener & Larsen, 1993; Larsen & Diener, 1992; Warr, 1987, 1990).

Third, psychological well-being is reflected in people's attitude towards life (Diener, 1994; Myers, 1992; Veenhoven, 1988).

Carol Ryff defined the following aspects of psychological well-being: self-sufficiency, positive relationships with other people, life goals, self-realization, potential, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). Multiple researchers then enriched this list with such aspects as the ability to successfully accomplish tasks (Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, 2008), psychological capital, happiness (Pollard & Lee, 2003), and life satisfaction (Diener & Suh, 1997; Seligman, 2002a, 2002b).

The first attempt to define psychological well-being was made by N. Bradburn in 1969. His survey marked the shift from psychiatric diagnostics to a focus on ordinary people's reactions. He observed how people tried to cope with hardships and everyday problems. In his works, N. Bradburn emphasized the importance of psychological well-being for overcoming hardships. He believed that a person could be psychologically well only if his positive emotions overpowered negative emotions (Bradburn, 1969).

Generally, sensations play a dominant role in theories of subjective well-being. These sensations have been addressed in the works of E. Diener and E. Suh. They argued that subjective well-being consisted of three interconnected components: life satisfaction (cognitive sphere) and positive and negative emotions (affective sphere) (Diener & Suh, 1997).

In addition to health benefits, positive emotions are closely associated with psychological wellness (Fredrickson, 2000). For example, strategies for personality psychological security, to a great extent, depend on a person's positive emotional state. Positive re-evaluating and adding meaning to ordinary events can act as stress relief. These strategies help people acquire crisis management (coping) skills that contribute not only to psychological security but also to overall psychological well-being.

Laughter generates positive sensations (Bachorowski & Owren, 2001) and reinforces the immune system. It is important to note that the laughter effect is mediated by subjective experiences and impacts subjective well-being (Mahony, Burroughs & Lippman, 2002). Laughter is often associated with humor (cognitive construct). People who make use of humor can cope with stressful situations more effectively. Laughter increases the amount of immunoglobulins, a vitally important protein that protects human organisms from respiratory diseases. These data show that people capable of preserving a positive emotional state under stress demonstrate a higher immunity level (Dillon, Minchoff & Baker, 1985).

Empirical data prove that positive emotions add to adjustment to acute and chronic situational stresses. For example, people who were able to find positive sensations and positive purport while caring for relatives and friends with HIV could handle their grief caused by the death of that person with greater ease (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). The same effect can be seen in children of women who managed to have a positive attitude despite difficulty in their delivery and extended admission; both mothers and children showed a lower percent of complications if they had healthy general psychological well-being (Affleck & Tennen, 1996). In the context of personal stress, a positive spirit can provide a "safety cushion", which is necessary for further efforts to cope with stress.

In the past few decades, the amount of studies dedicated to subjective well-being has increased, which testifies to its social demand, individual value relevance, importance of subjective expertise and acceptance that well-being includes aspects that go beyond economic prosperity (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). This phenomenon attracted scientists' active interest in the late 1960s, but as a subject of philosophic thought, it has existed and been challenged since ancient times. Currently, researchers have not agreed to a single definition of subjective well-being, and various concepts have been suggested, including "psychological well-being", "subjective well-being", "happiness" and "life satisfaction" (Karapetyan, 2014).

Modern research efforts are directed to the search of subjective well-being, life satisfaction and happiness indicators. In her monograph, S.V. Yaremchuk (Yaremchuk, 2012) analyzed western and domestic research on subjective well-being. In the USA, Austria and many other EU countries, monitoring of subjective well-being is regularly conducted. In Russia, this area of research is in its initial stage. The few studies that have been conducted are fragmented and small. In these psychological surveys, subjective well-being normally includes cognitive (life satisfaction) and affective (positive emotion experience) components. In contrast, foreign records allow experts to summarize external variables that define individual subjective well-being (age, gender, social status, residence, income, etc.). According to these publications, individual variables greatly contributed to the explanation

of subjective well-being (H.M. Kehr, D. Nettle, J.D. Blore) (quoted in Shamionov, 2008). M. Argyle (Argyle, 2003) wrote about the insignificance of objective factors' influence on subjective well-being levels. Some domestic papers find consistent patterns in Russian subjective well-being that differ from those in foreign research works (Yaremchuk, 2013). P.M. Shamionov (Shamionov, 2008) assumes that specific cognitive features of subjective well-being exist, and their criteria differ among social groups including professional fields.

Subjective well-being is what people call happiness, satisfaction or pleasure.

Subjective well-being is a relatively stable construct. In addition to particular personal characteristics, a person possesses a particular stable level of subjective well-being, and he strives to preserve it. Therefore, B. Headey and A. Wearing (Headey & Wearing, 1992) stated that a balance between a person, an event and psychological well-being exists. Whereas in mobile equilibrium, the nature of subjective well-being is steady most of the time. Additionally, equilibrium involves physical well-being, physical resources, absence of fatigue, psychological well-being, unrestricted mobility efficiency in actions, and good relationships with people (Herzlich, 1973). Philip Brickman and Donald Campbell (Brickman & Campbell, 1971) reported that people are likely to return to a previous level of happiness even after very memorable events in their life (marriage, birth of children, etc.). According to J. Ormeland and W. Schaufeli (Ormel & Schaufeli, 1991), only recent events affect people's subjective well-being, and this influence decreases quickly.

Recently, the theory of equilibrium has been further developed in the works by E.M. Cummings and P.T. Davies (Cummings & Davies, 2010), who replaced the notion "equilibrium" with the notion "homeostasis". The authors demonstrate the role of homeostasis in protecting a particular level of subjective well-being and formulate the following constants:

- If a person experiences no challenge, subjective well-being remains at the given value level.
- When faced with a reasonable challenge, an individual's level of subjective well-being will slightly differ within the given value.
- A strong homeostatic defense prevents the level of subjective well-being from dramatically dropping below the given value.
- If the task is too complicated for homeostasis, the level of subjective well-being decreases sharply.

In the study by Leo B. Hendry and Marion Kloep (Hendry & Kloep, 2002) dealing with the correlation between problems and personal resources, their theory was based on five basic principles:

- 1) To stimulate development, people have to face problems.
- 2) Successful resolution of problems gives rise to advancement.
- 3) If the problem is not settled, it can provoke further problems in future problem solving.
- 4) Problem solving is a dialectical process, which leads to personality and/or environment changes and, consequently facilitates development.
- 5) People possess various levels of resources for problem solving.

The findings of recent studies prove the idea that subjective well-being is closely connected with personality-specific features (E. Diener, N. Hayes & S. Joseph, J.L. Gutierrez), religiosity (M.M. Poloma & B.F. Pendleton), self-respect (U. Schimmack & E.D. Diener), harmony in interpersonal relations (A. Reid), and goal achievement (H.M. Kehr). Factors defining subjective well-being vary and comprise age, race, gender, education, income, social relations and occupation (C.L.M. Keyes & M.B. Waterman).

Subjective well-being depends on achievements in various spheres (i.e., health, finance, leisure and work) (Van Praag et al., 2003). Vocational factors also add to subjective well-being, particularly to professional comparison and professional identity (Lachterman & Meir, 2004).

Throughout the entire XX century, the question of how professional activity influenced an individual was widely discussed by scholars in the field of organizational studies (B. Furåker, R. Hackman & G.R. Oldham, L.H. Hansen & P. Orban, L. Lennerlöf, P. Pettersson, T. Theorell, C. Von Otter), and work was mainly treated as a risk factor. Some researchers concentrated on positive aspects of professional activity. Thus, some scholars (M. Jahoda, R.L. Kahn, S.E. Kunnen, H.A. Bosma, S.E. Van Halen & C.P.M. Van der Meulen, K.E. Weick) argued that work could be of great significance and has a positive impact on a person's social life and shape his/her identity. Additionally, occupation can positively affect people's health and psychological well-being (U. Ericsson, J. Forslin, M. Frankenhaeuser) and be a vital indicator of subjective well-being (L. Foldspang, M. Mark, K. Mørk Puggaard, O.M. Melchior Poulsen, U. Johansson, G. Ahonen, S. Aasnaess). Therefore, work possesses a great potential for personal and professional development (T. Backström, F.M. van Eijnatten, M. Kira, G. Brulin, E. Ekstedt, P. Docherty, J. Forslin, A.B. Shani, J. Forslin). J. R. Graham and M. L. Shier (Graham & Shier, 2010) proved that interpersonal relationships at and away from work are principal factors that influence the subjective well-being of employees.

Positive indicators of subjective well-being associated with professional activity involve job satisfaction. Negative indicators comprise workaholism and burnout.

In 2001 in Sweden, U.G. Gerdtham and M. Johannesson (Gerdtham & Johannesson, 2001) found a direct positive correlation between education and subjective well-being, in which people with a diploma of higher education feel happier and more satisfied. Several years later, Guglielmo Maria Caporale and her colleagues (Caporale et al., 2007) substantiated the hypothesis that subjective well-being of people with a higher level of education directly depends on their income. Qualification gives rise to particular expectations associated with a high level of income, which do not always come true. Richard A. Easterlin (Easterlin, 2003) also detected a positive correlation between education level and subjective well-being throughout the person's lifespan. His findings show that well-educated people of any age are likely to be happier than those with a low educational level.

We assume that specific features and differences in subjective well-being depend not only on professional activity but also on a person's area of business. In Russian professions, a *main type of labor activity* requires particular training and makes a sustainable livelihood. The notion "occupation" has several meanings, and in the framework of our study, we treat it as an activity a person is engaged in dur-

ing a particular period of time. Profession is something integral, although in some cases it does not coincide with the current area of work.

It can be illustrated by the example of students and prisoners. Additionally, being trained in a profession, a person can be involved in various types of activity due to circumstances.

Method

Sampling

The number of respondents was 2229 people divided according to their occupation. They were organized into 9 categories: students (432), psychologists (254), doctors (85), educators (221), engineering and technical staff (264), service industry employees (212), workers (112), military men (298), and prisoners (351).

Methods

L.V. Karapetyan, in collaboration with G.A. Glotova, analyzed psychological well-being and developed a new research instrument (Glotova & Karapetyan, 2009). Nine descriptors of subjective well-being were defined, and the respondents were asked to evaluate themselves according to a 7-grade scale:

- 1) Three positive descriptors — happy, lucky, optimistic — oriented to a person's inner world (i.e., a person's life attitude, attitudes toward personal past and future, sense of shelteredness/insecurity). They comprised inward-oriented indicators of subjective well-being (internal positive indicator of subjective well-being (SW));
- 2) Three positive descriptors — reliable, competent, successful — oriented to the outer world (i.e., personal relationships with friends, family and colleagues; occupation activity and its quality). These descriptors constituted positive external indicators of subjective well-being;
- 3) Three negative descriptors — pessimistic, unhappy, envious — a lowered general level of subjective well-being is a negative indicator of subjective well-being.

Results

The results obtained show that the respondents clearly understand the task of self-assessment consistent with the above-mentioned SW descriptors. In addition to separate descriptor estimates, we also computed overall estimates of each of the three blocks (indicators) and integral estimation by indicators (A+B-C). This integral estimation was named the subjective well-being index.

Based on the three blocks of descriptor assessments, the subjects were divided into four groups by a two-step cluster analysis: low, decreased, increased and high index of subjective well-being. The most numerous group (28.6%) was the group with decreased SW index (638); the groups with low and high SW indexes demonstrated an almost equal number of respondents (25.9% of all of the respondents; 578 and 577 people, respectively). The low SW index group included the lowest number of respondents (436) and constituted 19.6 % of all of the respondents.

Table 1. The subjects' objective well-being index

	N	SW index	Positive internal indicator	Positive external indicator	Negative indicator
Doctors	85	26.92	15.58	16.61	5.27
Service industry	212	24.76	14.98	15.23	5.45
Industrial intelligentsia	264	24.04	14.44	15.37	5.77
Workers	112	24.23	14.66	14.88	5.31
Military men	298	26.77	16.23	16.64	6.10
psychologists	254	24.82	15.68	15.02	5.87
Educators	221	25.05	15.06	15.73	5.74
Students	432	24.13	14.99	15.43	6.30
Prisoners	351	16.87	11.04	12.65	6.83
Total	2229	23.67	14.56	15.13	6.02

Table 2. Sampling distribution by groups with low, decreased, increased and high subjective well-being index

	Low SW index	Decreased SW index	Increased SW index	High SW index
Doctors	0 .00%	0 .00%	85 13.32%	0 .00%
Service industry	10 1.73%	202 46.33%	0 .00%	0 .00%
Industrial intelligentsia	9 1.56%	0 .00%	255 39.97%	0 .00%
Workers	10 1.73%	0 .00%	102 15.99%	0 .00%
Military men	35 6.06%	0 .00%	0 .00%	263 45.58%
Psychologists	20 3.46%	234 53.67%	0 .00%	0 .00%
Educators	25 4.33%	0 .00%	196 30.72%	0 .00%
Students	118 20.42%	0 .00%	0 .00%	314 54.42%
Prisoners	351 60.73%	0 .00%	0 .00%	0 .00%
Total	578 100.00%	436 100.00%	638 100.00%	577 100.00%

The majority of the low SW group were prisoners (67.3%), and 20.42% were students; these individuals had high values of negative indicators. The representatives of the remaining types of activities comprised an insignificant number. Generally, maximum high values of negative indicators are typical of this group, whereas positive indicators of this group (both internal and external) were expressed minimally.

The group with decreased SW index had low external positive descriptors' values and high expression of negative indicators. A total of 53.67% of psychologists and service industry employees (46.33%) were included in this group.

Industrial intelligentsia (39.97%), educators (30.72%), workers (15.99%) and doctors (13.32%) formed the group with an increased SW index. External positive descriptors were higher in this group compared to the decreased SW group.

Representatives of the fourth group (54.42% of students and 45.58% of military men) possessed high SW index. They had the highest valued of both internal and external positive indicators and the lowest value of negative indicators.

Conclusion

The analysis of the results obtained made it possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. The problem of subjective well-being is well represented in the psychological literature. Factors influencing its formation are theoretically formulated and considered. However, the impact of occupation has not been addressed in the publications we have studied.
2. Various approaches to the given issue and to its criteria exist. Yet, the existing models determine the level based on positive criteria.
3. The individual descriptors of subjective well-being (positively oriented to the personal inner world, positively oriented to the personal outer world, and negative factors) made it possible to differentiate the overall sample and divided the respondents into groups based on the subjective well-being index.
4. The existing difference between respondents engaged in various types of activities manifests itself in the index of subjective well-being.
5. Among respondents with a high level of subjective well-being, there are many students and military men. Both types of individuals are highly represented in the group with a low level of subjective well-being, which can possibly be explained by radical judgment in assessing their own positive and negative qualities.
6. An increased level of subjective well-being is common in educators and industrial intelligentsia.
7. Prisoners normally have a low level of subjective well-being.
8. Service industry employees as well as psychologists are likely to have a decreased level of subjective well-being. Representatives of "person-person" professions do not highly evaluate their own qualities in regard to predicted well-being ("reliable", "competent", "successful") due to a high degree of reflexivity.
9. Because the questionnaire used in the survey is a minimized version of a psychodiagnostic tool and has a limited capacity. To obtain firm conclusions of the

subjects' real subjective well-being, it is necessary to analyze the questionnaire correlations with other techniques to identify the level of the given construct.

10. The correlations among subjective well-being and individual and personality characteristics of the respondents in regard to their occupation should be explored.

Therefore, this study proves that occupation-specific features influence personality subjective well-being, and the given problem should be further addressed both theoretically and empirically in thorough and more detailed studies.

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