DOES AUTHENTICITY PREDICT SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS
OF TURKISH TEACHER CANDIDATES

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Abstract

Authenticity is associated with adaptive psychological characteristics and may be predictive of subjective happiness. The aim of this study is to investigate the associations of authenticity with subjective happiness. The study was conducted with 317 university students (133 men, 184 women; M age = 20.8 yr.). Participants completed the Turkish version of Authenticity Scale and the Turkish version of Subjective Happiness Scale. Subjective happiness was correlated negatively with two sub-factors of authenticity: accepting external influence and self-alienation and positively with the authentic living factor of authenticity. Self-alienation and accepting external influence predicted negatively and authentic living predicted positively to subjective happiness, accounting for 49% of the variance collectively. The results were discussed in the light of the related literature and dependent recommendations to the area were given.

Key Words: Authenticity, subjective happiness, multiple regression analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history in most of the cultures behaving congruent with feelings and thoughts and "to be oneself" has been perceived as a moral necessity (Bialystok, 2009), which is called often as authenticity. Origin of the authenticity concept can be found in recommendations of the ancient Greek philosophy; such as "Know thyself" and "To thine own self be true" (Harter, 2002). Similarly, from an Anatolian perspective, the very well-known Turkish teologist, Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, has emphasized the importance of to be an authentic individual by saying; "Either appear as you are or be as you appear".

Authenticity was described in various ways by different authors such as "accordance between how someone presents himself and what he actually is" (Bialystok, 2009) and "being emotionally sincere, having self-attunement, and psychological depth, and behaving candidly and without having hidden intentions" (Sheldon, 2009). Snyder and Lopez (2007) enlarged the description of the concept and considered authenticity as representing one's true beliefs, values, and actions to oneself and others sincerely, behaving faithfully, and taking responsibility for one's own emotions and behaviors (Peterson & Park, 2004). More recently, a three-dimensional authenticity model was developed by Wood and his colleagues: self-alienation, accepting external influence, and authentic living.

The first dimension involves an inadequate sense of identity because of not knowing oneself thoroughly and discrepancy between the conscious awareness and real experience. The second dimension includes a belief that the individual must adjust to the expectations of others. And the last dimension refers to being true to oneself and behaving consistent with one's own beliefs and values. While these three components of authenticity have been experienced differently at the phenomenological level, they interact mutually each other. For instance an individual who does not accept external influence behaves more authentically while another individual who accepts external influence are more likely to behave with more self-alienated. In this

model authentic living is a sign of authenticity, whereas self-alienation and accepting external influences show inauthenticity (Pinto, Maltby, Wood & Day, 2012; Wood et al., 2008).

Studies traditionally demonstrated that authenticity is a strong and positive predictor of psychological health. In these studies it was found that authenticity is related positively to self-esteem, subjective well-being, psychological well-being (Wood et al., 2008), agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness (Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997), and well-being at work (Ménard & Brunet, 2011), Contrarily authenticity was found negatively associated with psychological symptoms such as stress, anxiety, depression (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997; Wood et al., 2008), and neuroticism (Ryan et al., 1997).

Subjective happiness

The concept of subjective happiness, evolved from the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and was described as the balance of positive-negative affect, overall life satisfaction (Diener, 2000) and psychological state of well-being, joy, and contentment (Lyubomirsky, 2001). It is based on the question of why some individuals are happier than others or why some seem to have the capacity to be happy in the face of negative experiences (Lyubomirsky, 2001). Subjective happiness is relatively consistent over time and across situations, and plays a crucial role on how people perceive, interpret, recall, and actually experience life events in a positive or negative way (Lyubomirsky & Tucker, 1998).

Subjective happiness contains both an emotional and a cognitive aspect, while the former is usually further, divided into presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect, the latter is mentioned to as life satisfaction. Individuals who have higher level of subjective happiness are also more likely to have positive thoughts about themselves (Campbell, 1981; Lee & Im, 2007), to feel more personal control (Larson, 1989), to evaluate recent experiences in their lives as more pleasant (Matlin & Gawron, 1979), and to give more intense emotional reactions to positive events, but less long lasting to negative events (Seidlitz, Wyer, & Diener, 1997). And therefore subjective happiness is generally considered as a component of the good life (Diener, Scollon, & Lucas, 2003). Consistent with this Veenhoven proposed that "happiness is the degree to which a person evaluates the overall quality of his present life-as-a-whole positively and denotes an overall evaluation of life" (1997, p. 3-4). Similarly, Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) emphasized that 'one may conceivably appraise oneself as a very happy person, despite having only a somewhat happy life; also 'one may identify oneself as a generally unhappy person, despite having [experienced a number of positive emotions pleased, proud and particularly excited] in the previous month.' (p. 140).

In previous research subjective happiness was found positively related with self-perceptions of well-being (Diener, 2000; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandi, 1998), life satisfaction (Garcia & Siddiqui, 2009), satisfying relationships, positive emotions (Diener & Seligman, 2002), mental health (Liem, Lustig, & Dillon, 2010), positive self-evaluation in young (Cheng & Furnham, 2004), and self-enhancing bias (Lee & Im, 2007). On the other hand subjective happiness has been found to relate negatively to the depressive symptoms (Chaplin, 2006) and internet addiction (Akın, 2012).

Present Study

Although research conducted with the authenticity is encouraging, to date, however, no empirical research has examined whether authenticity predicts subjective happiness. This study has been conducted to examine the predictive role of authenticity on subjective happiness. Since authentic people behave honestly, openly, and according to their innate feelings and intentions authenticity is accepted as a key characteristic of healthy functioning and psychological well-being (Harter, 2002; Wood et al., 2008). Also authentic living may protect individual against psychological disorders. Similarly individuals who have higher levels of subjective happiness seem to have more positive thoughts, see themselves in a more favorable light, feel more personal control (Larson, 1989), perceive their past life events as more pleasant (Matlin & Gawron, 1979), and react emotionally more strong to positive events (Seidlitz et al., 1997). They are also less likely to have psychological symptoms and more likely to have a healthy psychological and social life and active coping strategies. Moreover previous evidence suggests that both authenticity and subjective happiness are strongly and negatively related to negative affect (Chaplin, 2006; Wood et al., 2008) and positively to positive affect (Diener, 2000; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Suh et al., 1998; Wood et al., 2008). Therefore there may be a positive association between

49

authenticity and subjective happiness. Based on the above relationships of authenticity and subjective happiness, in the current research the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Accepting external influence will be negatively associated with subjective happiness.

Hypothesis 2. Self-alienation will be positively associated negatively associated with subjective happiness.

Hypothesis 3. Authentic living will be positively associated with subjective happiness.

METHOD

Participants

In this study, participants were 317 university students (184 women, 133 men) who enrolled four different undergraduate programs: psychological counseling and guidance (*n*= 80), primary school education (*n*= 67), science education (*n*= 75), and mathematics education (*n*= 95). Of the participants, 77 were freshman, 50 were sophomores, 127 were juniors, and 63 were seniors. Their ages ranged from 17 to 31 years old (*M* = 20.8, *SD* = 0.5). Convenience sampling was used for the selection of participants.

Measures

Authenticity Scale. This concept was measured using the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008). This scale is a 12-item self-report inventory. Items were rated on a 7-point scale with anchors 1: Does not describe me at all and 7: Describes me very well. The scale has three sub-dimensions: Accepting external influence (e.g., "Other people influence me greatly"), Self-alienating (e.g., "I don't know how I really feel inside"), and Authentic living (e.g., "I live in accordance with my values and beliefs"). A Turkish adaptation of this scale by Akın and Dönmezogullari (2010) with 528 Turkish university students (288 women, 242 men), has three factors explaining 57% of the total variance. Internal consistencies were .73, .72, and .75 and three-week test-retest reliability estimates were .89, .86, and .79 for the three factors, respectively.

Subjective Happiness Scale. Subjective happiness was measured using the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Turkish adaptation of this scale was done by Akın and Satici (2011). The Subjective Happiness Scale is a 4-item self-report instrument and each item was rated on a 7-point scale. This scale is a summative scale, with item 4 being reversed scored. All answers given will be totaled to indicate the level of subjective happiness, with a high number indicating a greater incidence of subjective happiness. Results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the uni-dimensional model was well fit to Turkish population (x^2/df=0.71, p=0.49193, RMSEA=.000, NFI=.99, CFI=1.00, IFI=1.00, RFI=.98, GFI=1.00, AGFI=.99, and SRMR=.015). The internal consistency reliability coefficient was .86 and the three-week test-retest reliability coefficient was .73.

Procedure

Permission for participation of students was obtained from related chief departments and students voluntarily participated in research. Completion of the scales was anonymous and there was a guarantee of confidentiality. The scales were administered to the students in groups in the classrooms. The measures were counterbalanced in administration. Prior to administration of measures, all participants were told about purposes of the study.

Statistical Analysis

In this research, multiple linear regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to investigate the relationships between authenticity and subjective happiness. The variables which were entered in multiple regression analysis were measured by summing the items of each scale. These analyses were carried out via SPSS 11.5.

RESULTS

Descriptive Data and Correlations

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables. Preliminary correlation analysis showed that accepting external influence (*r*= -.13) and self-alienation (*r*= -.61) were related negatively to subjective happiness. Authentic living (*r*= .41) was positively associated with subjective happiness.

Table 1:Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations Among Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Subjective happiness	21.66	5.99			
2. Accepting external influence	13.94	7.24	-.13*		
3. Self-alienation	9.20	5.26	-.61**	.51**	
4. Authentic living	25.11	4.39	.41**	-.44**	-.39**

*$p<.05$, **$p<.01$

Multiple Regression Analysis

Before applying regression, assumptions of multiple regression were checked. The data were examined for normality by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated normality of distributions of test scores for all tests in the current study. Outliers are cases that have data values that are very different from the data values for the majority of cases in the data set. Outliers were investigated using Mahalanobis distance. A case is outlier if the probability associated with its D^2 is .001 or less (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Based on this criterion, twelve data were labeled as outliers and they were deleted. Multi-collinearity was checked by the variance inflation factors (VIF). All the VIF values were less than 10 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), which indicated that there was no multi-collinearity.

Multiple regression analysis was performed in which the dependent variable was subjective happiness and the independent variables were dimensions of authenticity (Table 2). As many of those predictor variables were dependent on each other, forward stepwise procedure, which includes one new explanatory variable at each step, specifically the most associated with the dependent variable while being, at the same time, independent of the explanatory variables already included in the model. The criteria to include the variables from the regression model were: criterion probability-of-F-to enter <=.05.

Table 2: Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Variable Predicting Subjective happiness

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficents	t	R	R^2	F
	B	SE_B	β				
Step 1							
Self-alienation	-.69	.05	-.61	-13.77	.61	.37	189.608*
Step 2							
Self-alienation	-.85	.06	-.74	-14.83	.65	.42	114.604*
Accepting External Influence	.20	.04	.25	5.01			
Step 3							
Self-alienation	-.77	.06	-.68	-14.06			
Accepting External Influence	-.28	.04	-.35	-7.07	.70	.49	101.077*
Authentic Living	.41	.06	.30	6.57			

*$p<.001$

Three stepwise multiple regression analysis has applied to assess which dimensions of authenticity were the best predictors of subjective happiness. Table 2 showed the results of multiple regression analysis where the independent variables were authenticity scores and the dependent variable was subjective happiness. Self-alienation entered the equation first, accounting for 38% of the variance in predicting subjective happiness (R^2=.38, adjusted R^2=.37, $F(1, 315)$=189.608, $p<.01$). Accepting external influence entered on the second step accounting for an additional 4% of the variance (R^2=.42, ΔR^2=.04, adjusted R^2=.42, $F(2, 314)$=114.604, $p<.01$). Authentic living entered on the third step accounting for an additional 7% of the variance (R^2=.49, ΔR^2=.07, adjusted R^2=.49, $F(3, 313)$=101.077, $p<.01$). The standardized beta coefficients indicated the relative influence of the variables in last model with self-alienation (β= -.68, $p<.01$), accepting external influence (β= -.35, $p<.01$),

and authentic living (β= .30, p<.01) all significantly influencing subjective happiness and self-alienation was strongest predictor.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate the predictive role of authenticity on subjective happiness. To our knowledge, this is the first study investigating the relationships between authenticity and subjective happiness. As predicted, results demonstrated that subjective happiness related to accepting external influence and self-alienation negatively and to authentic living positively. In interpreting the results of the present findings, several plausible explanations exist. First of all these findings are in line with the research that has shown that authenticity is closely associated with the indices of psychological adjustment such as self-esteem and life satisfaction (Goldman & Kernis, 2002). These findings are also consistent with the literature which demonstrated subjective happiness is closely associated with the indices of psychological adjustment such as life satisfaction (Garcia & Siddiqui, 2009), positive emotions (Diener & Seligman, 2002), positive self-evaluation in young (Cheng & Furnham, 2004), and self-enhancing bias (Lee & Im, 2007). Second subjective happiness provides (and also facilitates) feelings of warmth, positive thoughts, and equilibrium that people experience when they are authentic. Therefore authenticity and subjective happiness may share the same properties in nature and people who high in subjective happiness can feel themselves more authentic.

This study had many limitations. Firstly, it was correlational and based on a convenience sample. Secondly, the present sample's results are limited to university students so generality is restricted and more population-representative samples need to be used in future studies to examine the relationships between authenticity and subjective happiness. Also explicit investigation of mediating or latent variables is important.

Consequently, the present research provides important information about the predictors of hope and would further our understanding of the psychological process of subjective happiness. The implication is that tendency to accept external influence and self-alienation may indicate a risk for low subjective happiness. Nonetheless it is important to note that scientific research on authenticity is still in its nascent phases and more research will need to be done before any implications can be drawn. Also there are enough positive indicators from to suggest that more research on authenticity would be a worthwhile.

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52

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