Original Article

The relationship between life goals and personality traits with subjective well-being in adults

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Abstract

Introduction: Subjective well-being is component of psychological quality of life. According to research results, the type of life goals and personality traits are important in predicting the subjective well-being. So this study aims to investigate the role of life goals, personality traits with subjective well-being adults.

Materials and Methods: This research is a descriptive correlation study, sample consisted of 200 adults (25 to 60 years), residing in Zone 6 in Tehran, that were selected using method multi- stage random sampling. Participants responded to questionnaires of positive and negative affect, life satisfaction, Big five Personality Factor and Life goals. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 17, Pearson correlation coefficients and hierarchical regression.

Results: The results correlation coefficient showed intrinsic goals, extrinsic goals and personality traits have positive correlation with subjective wellbeing and neuroticism has negative relationship with subjective wellbeing ($P<0.05$). Enter regression results showed that There is negative relationship between Subjective well-being and extrinsic' importance ($P<0.01$) and positive relationship between subjective well being and 'extrinsic' attainment ($P<0.05$). Also, the results of hierarchical regression results showed that life goals are able to predict subjective well-being ($R^2=-0.09$, $P<0.0001$) Although life goals have relatively small share of the compared to strong predictors personality traits ($R^2=-0.49$, $P<0.0001$).

Conclusion: Considering that life goals are able to predict the contribution of subjective well-being that can not be predicted by personality traits. Therefore, it's recommended that psychologist to consider life goals as an important factor in cultural and economic different situations at their studies.

Keywords: Goals, Personality traits, Well-being

Introduction

Subjective well-being is a psychological component of quality of life. It defines as people's concept about life in behavioral, emotional and psychological functions and mental health dimensions (1). In general, subjective well-being defines as dominance of positive affect to negative affect (emotional component) and life satisfaction (cognitive component) (2). Life satisfaction refers to cognitive-judgment process (3), that people evaluate their quality of life based on complex of criteria (4).

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Emotions as a main aspect of human behavior play an important role in life. Human life becomes to mean less and wearying without emotions. Human perceives world as place full of mean and sense through affects (5). Waston and Tellegen divide affects into basic two affect dimensions as positive and negative affects. Negative affect means as level of unpleasant sense that individual experiences so, it refers as general dimension of internal hopeless and not involvement with pleasure job that it induces mood states such as anger, blue, hate, guilt sense or fear. The second dimension is positive affect that it means active energy, high concentration and involvement with pleasure job. This dimension conclude progressive domain of positive mood states such as happiness, sense of ability, tendency, desire

and self esteem (6).

The role of type of goals in mental well-being is emphasized especially in self-determination theory. This theory refers to positive or negative effect of goals in well-being. In this theory, intrinsic goals (for example the goals related to personal growth, emotional intimacy and community involvement) are yielders natively because of these goals directly satisfy the basic and natural psychological needs which related to autonomy, competence and dependency. Adversely, extrinsic goals (for example Financial success, attractive appearance and social recognition) included yields and others positive evaluation that they do not satisfy directly the humans basic needs (7). Now, the goals are identified as key factors in behavioral regulation and personality integrity and their roles in behavioral and emotional outcomes are emphasized currently by personality psychologists (refers to 8) so the present research studies the role of personality characteristics in addition to the goals. In fact, the human personality is the most major dimension and structure of his/her personality that it helps to formation of his/her life style. One of the most useful and comprehensive personality theories is the Costa and McCrae five factor theory. In this viewpoint, personality has classified structure with five basic dimensions includes: Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (9).

The role of goals in well-being is emphasized by researchers. Some researches assess the specific aspects of goals that they promote mental well-being. The researches based on Ryan and Kaser theory used measurements of achievement to intrinsic and extrinsic goals. The findings showed that valuing, success and self-perception as someone who achieved to intrinsic goals are positively associated with well-being (7,10,11) but achievement to extrinsic goals has not benefits for well-being and even it has a negative effect. Also extrinsic goals have harmful effects on psychological adjustment (refers to 8,12). In addition, Anić and Tončić research (13) and Martos and Kopp research (14) indicated that high well-being individuals are happier and they value for intrinsic goals but people with lowest level of well-being value for extrinsic goals more than intrinsic goals.

Also Lekes et al. (15) found that there is positive and significant relation between intrinsic goals and mental well-being in USA and China. In addition, extrinsic goals have a positive relation with mental well-being in China. Spasovski found that the intrinsic goals have significant effect on mental well-being in Hungary and Macedonia. In addition, extrinsic goals can predict positively but weakly the mental well-being. Also Rijavec et al. reported that extrinsic goals have not negative relation with well-being. They reported that group with high scores in extrinsic and intrinsic goals have higher level of well-being and the group with low scores in extrinsic and high scores in intrinsic goals have lower well-being compared to the first group (refers to 16).

Some researches assessed the relation between personality characteristics and goals. For example the researches indicated that neuroticism relates with low success in achievement to personal goals (17,18). Extroversion associates to goals and values related to power, enjoy and stimulation (19). Also, introvert individuals address the success as achievement to goals (18). Openness relates to self-ordering values (20). Adjustment relates to achievement to goals and goodwill values and association (21). Conscientiousness relates to achievement to goals and conformity. Also, it relates to high image of achievement in personal projects (19). Romero et al. (8) indicated that importance, possibility and achievement to intrinsic and extrinsic goals relate to mental well-being and mental well-being associate to high scores of importance, possibility and achievement to intrinsic goals and low scores for importance of extrinsic goals.

The importance of extrinsic goals has been predicted by 5 great characteristics of personality significantly it means that this importance relates to neuroticism, extroversion and conscientiousness positively and it relates negatively with openness and adjustment. The possibility and past achievement to extrinsic goals can predict positively by extroversion and conscientiousness and it can predict by freedom and adjustment negatively. Also it has indicated that intrinsic goals relate to positive indexes of well-being although extrinsic goals relate to negative indexes. In addition the results showed that extrinsic and intrinsic goals can predict mental well-being over than characteristics of personality.

Although researchers show more interest to these relations (22) but there is little items about the relation between characteristics of personality and extrinsic and intrinsic goals and the related characteristics to extrinsic and intrinsic goals.

Researchers have shown a strong relation between mental well-being and these characteristics. Adjustment and conscientiousness related to indexes of mental well-being such as positive affect and life satisfaction (23, 24). Shokri et al. (25) indicated that

there is positive and significant relation between extroversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness with three scales of well-being (positive and negative affects and life satisfaction) and there is negative relation between neuroticism and three scales of well-being. So according to researches, more importance to intrinsic goals compared to extrinsic goals has positive effect on well-being but attention to extrinsic goals can not good effect even it has negative effect. So, this research aimed to identify the relation between life goals and characteristics of personality with mental well-being among adults.

Materials and Methods

The statistical community of this descriptive-correlative study concluded all adult people (25-60 year) in 6th area of Tehran city. 200 participants were selected via multiphase randomized sampling method. First, list of area was supplied then 3 areas were selected randomly and 2 alleys were selected so the participants were 25-60 years adults who resident at least 1 year in the 6th area and they were volunteer to research.

In considering to research ethics, the participants ensured about confidentiality of information and approved by faculty of psychology and educational sciences of Semnan University. After participants full consent, the researchers explained about fulfillment of questionnaires and they asked the participants to fulfill the questionnaires without name. In ordering to estimation of sample number in correlation formula, 10 participants had been considered for every variable (refers to 26) so considering to number variables the acceptable minimum volume was 170 participants. In this research 200 participants were considered so this number was adequate for above formula. Data analyzed by descriptive statistics, simultaneous and classified regression and SPSS version 17. The research instruments concluded of Big Five Personality Factor Questionnaire, Life Goals Questionnaire and Positive and Negative Affects and Life Satisfaction Questionnaires (for evaluation of various dimensions of mental well-being).

Research instruments

- *Positive and Negative Affects Schedule:* This questionnaire used by Watson, Clark and Tellegen for evaluation of positive and negative affects (27). In this scale, 20 items concluded 20 emotions (10 positive and 10 negative) are presented in words format. The participants response to every item in 5 Likert scoring system (1: never to 5: very almost). The score range varies from 10 to 50. Watson et al.

reported Cronbach's α as 0.88 and 0.87 for positive and negative affects (27). Abolghasemi reported internal coefficient of items and total scale as 0.74 to 0.94 (28). In Bakhshipour and Dejkam research, this coefficient measured as 0.87 for two subscales (29). In the present research, Cronbach's α reported as 0.81 and 0.83 for positive and negative affects.

- *Satisfaction with Life Scale:* This scale made by Diener et al. (30) and it concluded of complex of items that they measure the life satisfaction. Every subscale has 7 items that it scores in 1 to 7 Likert scale. The range of scores varies from 5 to 35 (absolutely agree: 7 and absolutely disagree: 1). This questionnaire has been translated to Persian by Bayani, Mohammad Kouchaki and Goudarzi (31) and Cronbach's α measured as 0.83 and by re-test method it measured as 0.69. In the present study, it reported as 0.85.

- *The NEO Personality Inventory:* Costa and McCrae short form (1985) used for measurement of personality characteristics. This questionnaire has 60 questions that measure five factor included neuroticism (N), extroversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C). The participants score every question to Likert degrees (0: absolutely disagree to 4: absolutely agree). In some questions the item of absolutely disagree receive 0 score and other items receive 1, 2, 3 and 4 in right to left but in some questions the item of absolutely disagree receive 4 score and other items receive 0, 1, 2 and 3 scores in right to left. There are 12 questions for every factor (32). The Cronbach's α have been reported for five factors as 0.86, 0.77, 0.73, 0.68 and 0.81 respectively (33). In the present study the Cronbach's α have been reported for five factors as: E (0.73), A (0.77), O (0.71), C (0.77) and N (0.73).

- *Life Goals Questionnaire:* This questionnaire made by Casser and Ryan (1996). The 35-item version used in the present study that these 35 items divided into 7 groups: personal growth (goal of growth, mean and competence in life), relations (goal of closed relation with friends), society (goal of help to make better world and life with others), health (goal of a good physical sense), wealth (increased money and financial assets), celebrity (be famous and popular) and mental image (attractive and good look image). Every of these goals were evaluated by participants in 3 dimensions that concluded: importance (how important is this for you?), possibility (how likely is this goal occurs in your future?) and achievement (how have you achieved this goal?).

The items are scored in Likert 7 degrees from

never to very. wealth, celebrity and image are as external goals and personal growth, social cooperation, health and relations are as internal goals. This questionnaire had not been translated in Iran so the items were translated to Persian and the Persian items were translated to English via reverse translation by a specialist. Finally the last version supplied through comparison of two texts and revisions. Then the validity of this questionnaire was measured in this research. The results of Romero et al. research reported the validity of internal goals for importance, possibility and achievement as 0.89, 0.89 and 0.86 and they reported for external goals as 0.88, 0.83 and 0.82 respectively (8).

Results

The samples consisted of 114 women (57%) and 86 men (43%) in age range of 25-60 years. Number of 158 persons had job (79%) and 112 persons were single (42%). The degree of education of 84 persons was master and Ph.D. (42%), and 70 participants had education degree in range of MA to diploma (35%). Descriptive statistics and correlative matrix to evaluate the relation between life goals, personality characteristics and mental well-being were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of life aspiration, personality traits, and wellbeing

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Intrinsic importance	121.64 (12.93)	1									
2. Intrinsic likelihood	110.64 (14.59)	0.72**	1								
3. Intrinsic attainment	98.31 (15.71)	0.48**	0.69**	1							
4. Extrinsic importance	71.19 (13.44)	0.45**	0.41**	0.25**	1						
5. Extrinsic likelihood	66.01 (12.90)	0.39**	0.67**	0.40**	0.70**	1					
6. Extrinsic attainment	57.05 (11.68)	0.26**	0.50**	0.68**	0.49**	0.70**	1				
7. Neuroticism	31.24 (6.04)	-0.16*	-0.30**	-0.25**	0.02	-0.17*	-0.18**	1			
8. Extraversion	41.59 (5.80)	0.20**	0.30**	0.25**	0.23**	0.28**	0.32**	-0.40**	1		
9. Openness	38.51 (4.20)	0.20**	0.22**	0.23**	0.21**	0.15*	0.18*	-0.15*	0.20**	1	
10. Agreeableness	42.77 (4.47)	0.31**	0.29**	0.24**	-0.16**	-0.07	-0.02	-0.45**	0.31**	0.08	1
11. Conscientiousnes	46.03 (5.33)	0.37**	0.35**	0.40**	0.04	0.07	0.13	-0.33**	0.31**	0.20*	0.42**
12. Life satisfaction	22.57 (5.91)	0.10	0.27**	0.42**	0.00	0.23**	0.45**	-0.33**	0.28**	0.07	0.18**
13. Positive affect	36.92 (5.27)	0.16**	0.37**	0.42**	0.20**	0.34**	0.40**	-0.39**	0.41**	0.30**	0.15*
14. Negative affect	26.20 (6.21)	-0.05	-0.13	-0.07	0.21**	0.04	0.05	0.54**	-0.25**	0.04	-0.30**
15. Wellbeing	26.69 (11.67)	0.15*	0.37**	0.44**	-0.02	0.24**	0.38**	-0.63**	0.46**	0.14*	0.32**
16. Gender		-0.16*	-0.15*	-0.12	0.08	0.07	0.01	-0.05	-0.09	-0.14*	-0.27**
17. Age		-0.04	-0.05	-0.05	-0.10	-0.16*	-0.07	0.02	-0.13	-0.12	0.01

**$P \leq 0.01$ *$P \leq 0.05$

As Table 1 shows, the components of intrinsic goals (importance, possibility and achievement) in compare to components of extrinsic goals had higher mean scores. The correlative matrix of relations between life goals and mental well-being indicate that there is positive and significant relation between intrinsic goals (importance, possibility and achievement) and extrinsic goals (possibility and achievement) with mental well-being. Also the relations of personality characteristics and mental well-being indicate that neuroticism has negative and significant relation but extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness have positive and significant relation with mental well-being.

Regression was used to assess the roles of components of life goals in mental well-being prediction and the results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Model summary of regression of life satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect and wellbeing on the basis of life aspiration

Variables	Life satisfaction	Positive affect	Negative affect	Wellbeing
Age	0.02	-0.11	-0.09	0.01
Gender	-0.13*	-0.05	-0.04	-0.06
Intrinsic importance	-0.01	-0.15	-0.01	-0.07
Extrinsic importance	-0.29**	0.01	0.33**	-0.32**
Intrinsic likelihood	0.02	0.16	-0.31**	0.24*
Extrinsic likelihood	0.07	0.08	-0.03	0.08
Intrinsic attainment	0.14	0.27*	0.04	0.16
Extrinsic attainment	0.44***	0.13	0.03	0.27*
R^2	0.30	0.23	0.11	0.28

*$P<0.05$, ** $P<0.01$, ***$P<0.001$

Gender and age as mental well-being predictors inserted to regression analysis because of their relations with mental well-being and life goals. The results of Table 2 indicated that extrinsic importance (negatively) and extrinsic achievement (positively) can predict life satisfaction. Positive affect could be predicted positively through intrinsic achievement but extrinsic importance could predict the negative affect positively. Considering the total score of mental well-being, regression analysis shows that mental well-being could be predicted by extrinsic importance (negatively) and intrinsic achievement (positively). Overall, life goals explain 0.28 of mental well-being changes.

According to the self-determination theory, life goals predict portion of mental well-being which it cannot be predicted by personality characteristics. The classified regression was used for assessment of extra portion of life goals compare to personality characteristics and the findings are been presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Model summary of hierarchical regression of life aspiration, personality traits with Wellbeing and components of wellbeing

Variables	Wellbeing		Positive affect		Negative affect		Life satisfaction	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Age	0.011	0.019	-0.102	-0.083	-0.081	-0.090	0.027	0.017
Gender	-0.127*	-0.107*	-0.040	-0.044	0.039	0.018	-0.174**	-0.154
Neuroticism	0.535***	-0.458***	-0.265***	-0.210	0.501***	0.482***	-0.293***	-0.21
Extraversion	0.212***	0.189**	0.239**	0.178	0.047	-0.120	0.157*	0.087
Openness	-0.025	-0.022	0.159**	0.132	0.143*	0.102	-0.040	-0.054
Agreeableness	-0.100	-0.086	-0.159*	-0.099	-0.021	0.048	-0.077	-0.030
Conscientiousness	0.193***	0.167**	0.221**	0.195	-0.097	-0.106	0.082	-0.044
Extrinsic importance		-0.234**		0.000		0.208*		-0.244**
Intrinsic importance		-0.083		-0.165		0.003		-0.015
Extrinsic likelihood		0.101		0.107		0.029		0.073
Intrinsic likelihood		0.044		0.047		-0.115		-0.075
Extrinsic attainment		0.176		0.078		0.111		0.395**
Intrinsic attainment		0.132		0.175		0.047		0.153
R^2	0.49	0.09	0.32	0.07	0.32	0.04	0.17	0.18

*$P<0.05$, ** $P<0.01$, ***$P<0.001$

The findings of Table 3 in first phase indicate that neuroticism has negative relation with mental well-being, positive affect and life satisfaction but it has positive relation with negative affect. Openness has positive relation with mental well-being, positive affect and life satisfaction. In addition, positive relation between openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness with positive affect has been

approved. Also the findings of second phase indicate that extrinsic achievement (negatively) and intrinsic achievement (positively) can predict life satisfaction. In addition, extrinsic importance play positive role and in prediction of negative affect otherwise it play negatively in prediction of mental well-being. In overall, the results of classified regression indicate that life goals can predict mental well-being although they have low portion in comparison with personality characteristics.

Discussion

This research aimed to assess the relation between life goals and personality characteristics with adults' mental well-being. The correlative matrix of relations between life goals and mental well-being indicate that there is positive and significant relation between intrinsic goals (importance, possibility and achievement) and extrinsic goals (possibility and achievement) with mental well-being. Also neuroticism has negative and significant relation but extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness have positive and significant relation with mental well-being. Findings of correlative c-efficient indicated that extrinsic importance can predict life satisfaction negatively. Positive affect could be predicted positively through intrinsic achievement but extrinsic importance could predict the negative affect positively. Mental well-being has negative relation with extrinsic importance. These results accord to conducted researches (7,8,11). Also, extrinsic achievement has a positive and significant relation with mental well-being and life satisfaction. These findings accord to theories related to life goals and self-determination theory that they suggest achievement to goals is a source of well-being (8). Also, Croll and Fuller indicated that achievement to goals is important for well-being (34). Eryilmaz showed that well-being in a positive level achieve through life goals (35).

In explanation of these results it may be suggested that researches of western countries emphasize on role of intrinsic goals in prediction of mental well-being but generalization of this finding has not been assessed in other cultures. Also, some researchers suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic goals may affect as mentioned above only in rich countries (16). Different theories suggest that various types of threats lead to avoidance of intrinsic goals and they can trend people for extrinsic goals (36).

In addition, Casser et al. suggest that dependency to finance may be a method to sense safety so it can be an explanation for partial importance of extrinsic goals in developing countries. So the economical

crisis can increase financial trends and people experience unsafe senses and they compensate their sense through focus on financial goals (referred to 16). Also, people in developed countries have more freedom for choice in their life so they have more reasons for higher mental well-being (37). In addition to economic status, freedom for selection and level of growth are reasons for importance of intrinsic and extrinsic goals in culture. It seems that individual-based cultures allow people that they select their life style according to their attitudes and priorities (38). Also, people are free to following their goals and the native self are more important than others idea and approval but in group-based cultures in Asia (especially east of Asia) the personal goals are dependent to group goals (39). The group-based cultures follow physical looking, to be respected, glory and body image for example in group-based cultures of Latina the extrinsic goals has been related to high life satisfaction, perception of high personal freedom and higher life control (40). So we cannot ignore the roles of culture and economic satisfaction because they are strong predictors of life satisfaction and well-being among developing countries.

Some researches approved the relation between personality characteristics and mental well-being that it found in the present study (8,23,24). Also the results accord to Sheldon et al study. They studied the relation between personality, goals and mental well-being and they showed that personality affects on goal achievement and mental well-being (41).

The present study showed that neuroticism has a negative relation with mental well-being, positive affect and life satisfaction but it has a positive relation with negative affect. Extroversion has a positive relation with mental well-being, positive affect and life satisfaction. In addition the positive relation between openness and agreeableness with positive affect and same relation between conscientiousness, mental well-being and positive affect were approved that it accords to the conducted researches (8,23-25,42).

We suggest in explanation of mentioned findings that neuroticism increase the person's susceptibility for experience of stressful events and this susceptibility can damage the personal and social relationships and mental well-being. In adversely, personality characteristics (openness, agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness) increase person's susceptibility for experience of enjoyable events and these experiences can enhance the personal and social relationships, life satisfaction mental well-being. Finally, the present study can

predict the portion of life goals in mental well-being that it cannot be predicted by personality characteristics. The results accord to a prior research showed that life goals can predict mental well-being but they have a little portion in comparison with the strong predictors of personality characteristics (8). Also, the results are same to the researches that they indicate the goals and types of personality have significant effect on people's responses to the questions of mental well-being (43).

It is necessary that we consider to some limitations in findings explanation. In this research the relations between variables was assessed as cross-sectional so the future experimental and longitudinal studies should be conducted to determination the orientation between these variables. Also, the self-report can limit the conclusions derivate from research although most of the conducted researches in this field are based on self-reported data. On the other hand we should conscious in findings explanation and comparison them with other researches which

conducted in other cultures because socio-cultural factors, life environment and economic factors can affect the peoples judgment. Despite of the mentioned limitations, the study of roles of life is a valuable topic for psychologists especially personality psychologists future researches.

Conclusion

The present study illustrates the relationship of intrinsic and extrinsic goals derived from self-determination theory in Iranian culture. Therefore, subjective well-being is not merely affected by personality characteristics, and life goals have an effective role in psychological regulation.

Acknowledgement

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