ERD 2019
Education, Reflection, Development, Seventh Edition

PREDICTORS OF WELL-BEING AT BOYS AND GIRLS

Liliana Bujor (a)*
*Corresponding author

(a) Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania, E-mail: liliana.bujor@usm.ro

Abstract

The models used in this study identify the predictors of well-being into three large categories of variables which are: personality, family and the emotional regulation mechanisms for girls and boys. Well-being has been operationalized through high positive affect and life satisfaction, as well as low negative affect and emotional distress. Statistical analyses processed the responses of 516 subjects, aged between 14 and 34 (M = 18.62, SD = 3.32). From the personality factors, emotional stability is the strongest predictor of well-being (negative affect and emotional distress) for girls and boys. For boys, well-being (life satisfaction) is predicted by paternal responses to the manifestation of happiness (reward), whereas for girls, it is predicted by the responses of both parents to all the emotions under analysis. However, with regards to the adult attachment style, the relationship with father is relevant for boys; alienation in relation of attachment with father is the biggest predictor for negative affect. For the emotion regulation strategies, both emotion regulation strategies are predictors of well-being for girls and not for boys.

1. Introduction

Well-being (WB) has an adaptive function and is associated with a number of positive outcomes like: self-acceptance and self-esteem, physical and social function (Ryff & Singer, 1996; Tomyn, Fuller Tyszkiewicz, & Norrish, 2014). Well-being is accepted to be a broad concept, to have a cognitive and an affective dimension, separated and moderately correlated. The construct includes variables such as Satisfaction with Life, Positive and Negative Affect, Emotional Distress (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Galinha & Pais-Ribeiro, 2008). The concept of well-being can be assessed through different dimensions – cognitive and affective – and different levels of analysis – global and specific. Well-being is variedly operationalized in the literature, but a comprehensive review of studies in this area has found a number of constant variables: life satisfaction, high levels of positive effects and low levels of negative affect (Haga, Kraft, & Corby, 2009; Schutte, Manes, & Malouff, 2009).

2. Literature Review

In this analysis we will use a bottom up and a top down perspective to explain well-being. From the bottom up perspective there is a major influence of external life circumstances (e.g. material conditions; life events; social contexts) on the subjective experience of individuals. According to this perspective, adverse circumstances affect WB (Feist, Bodner, Jacobs, Miles, & Tan, 1995). From top down perspective, the intrapersonal (affective & cognitive) characteristics of individuals: personality factors, emotion regulation strategies (Brief, Butcher, George, & Link, 1993; Feist et al., 1995) have a major influence on WB. Theories postulated that two persons in the same circumstances can evaluate their WB in different ways. Results indicated that intrapersonal variables are stronger determinants of WB than contextual factors (Diener & Ryan, 2009).

The parental style for emotional socialization and the attachment style, like bottom up factors, allows the child to learn about emotions and to answer in social interactions through reactions of their parents (Baker, Fenning, & Crnic, 2010). Social support can improve psychological well-being and help in affective, physical and cognitive aspects of individual development. Also, it fulfils individuals' physical and psychological and social needs through self-esteem, loyalty, love and the sense of belonging to a group affective status (depression, anxiety, resentment are consequences of alienation as an attachment type) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Tan & Karabulutlu, 2005; Zimet et al., 1988).

Personality and emotion regulation, like top down factors, have significant relationships with WB. Two from five dimensions of personality (Big Five Theory), extraversion and neuroticism have meaningful relationships with positive and negative affect, cognitive style and attitudes (Canli, Ferri, & Duman, 2009). Specific emotion regulation strategies (suppression and cognitive reappraisal) influences well-being, social skills, physical and mental health, successful development, improvement in interpersonal relationships and work performance (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010; Bariola, Gullone, & Hughes, 2011; Horn, Possel & Hautzinger, 2010; Neumann, van Lier, Gratz, & Koot, 2010) but dates are contradictory for suppression; is associated both with a low level of satisfaction and wellbeing (John & Gross, 2004), and also with high levels of satisfaction and wellbeing (Schutte, Manes, & Malouff, 2009). Cognitive

reappraisal is related to positive emotions, well-being and life satisfaction (Aldao et al., 2010; Boden et al., 2013; Gross, 2001; John & Gross, 2004).

Such, Diener and Fujita concluded that life events and personality differ in the duration of their effects on WB; life events produce a short-term effect (three to six months on average) and personality produces a long-term effect (at least two years) in the variability of SWB (as cited in Galinha & Pais-Ribeiro, 2011).

Myers and Diener found, for instance, that the distribution of happiness for demographic variables (age, economic class, race, and educational level) is relatively constant and that happiness does not appear to depend significantly on external circumstances (as cited in Galinha & Pais-Ribeiro, 2011).

3. Research Method

3.1. Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the gender difference of the predictors of well-being. We measured the impact of personality factors, attachment style of the mother/father and the parenting style of socializing (mother/father's), internalizing (fear, sadness) and externalizing (anger, happiness) emotions during childhood; and the impact of the emotion regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression) on the general well-being in girls and boys.

3.2. Methodology

Personality was assessed though the FFPI –Five-Factor Personality Inventory (Miclea, Porumb, Cotârlea, & Albu, 2009). The instrument has 100 items rated on a five-step Likert-type scale. The Alpha Cronbach coefficients have the following scale values: 0.84 - extraversion, 0.80 - friendliness, 0.80 - conscientiousness, 0.81 - emotional stability and 0.78 – autonomy.

The parental style for emotional socialization was operationalized through EAC, Emotions as a Child Self-Rating Scale, (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2009). The parents' reaction for internalizing (fear, sadness) and externalizing (anger) emotions is measured for the mother and father separately. This instrument has 15 items for each emotion and five scales corresponding to the five emotion assessment strategies: reward, punishment, avoidance, neglect and amplification. Therefore, following the translation and adaptation of the instrument for Romanian population, the resulting internal consistency coefficients were similar to those of the translated instrument.

The attachment style was measured using IPPA - Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, (Greenberg & Armsden, 2009). This instrument measures the three attachment styles for the mother and father separately: communication, trust, and alienation from middle and late adolescence up to early adulthood. It has 25 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The Alpha Cronbach internal consistency coefficients of the scales translated into Romanian shows the following values: 0.76 - alienation mother scale, 0.79 - alienation father scale, - 0.85 - communication mother scale, 0.88 communication father scale, 0.85 - trust mother scale, 0.87 - trust father scale, 0.70 - total mother and 0.77- total father. Hence, the coefficients are comparable with the (total) original IPPA values.

Adaptive (cognitive reappraisal) and maladaptive (emotional suppression) emotion regulation strategies were measured using different scales of the ERQ- Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross &

John, 2003). This instrument has 10 statement-type items, distributed on two scales (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression). The answers to the questionnaire items were aimed at the level of agreement with the statements contained in the items, and were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale. The instrument translated and adapted for the Romanian population has adequate validity coefficients: 0.76 for cognitive reappraisal and 0.75 for expressive suppression.

Well-being was measured by three different scales: PANAS, SWLS - The Satisfaction with Life Scale and EDP - Emotional Distress Profile. PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) has two scales: positive affects (10 items - emotions) and negative affect (10 items - emotions) rated on a 5-step Likert scale. The Alpha Cronbach coefficients after the translation and validation of the Romanian population are: 0.75 - positive affect and 0.84 - negative affect. SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) has 5 items rated on a 7-step Likert scale with an Alpha Cronbach coefficient of 0.76. EDP (David, 2009), the emotional distress profile, is a 26-item scale that measures functional and dysfunctional negative emotions belonging to the category of "fear" and "sadness/depression". Thus, the items were rated on a 5-step Likert scale and the Alpha Cronbach coefficient applied for the instrument is 0.95.

3.3. The Sample of Subjects

We administered the questionnaires to 516 students (342 women, 174 men, 273 adolescents, 243 young people), aged between 14 and 34 (M = 18.62, SD = 3.32).

3.4. Procedure

The eight tools were applied in different educational contexts (courses, seminars and class hours). They were administered in paper-and-pencil format, with the average time of completion being 60-70 minutes. In order to avoid a tendency to façade answers, the questionnaires were anonymous (except for the participants who wanted to see their personal results as they wrote their names or initials).

4. Analyses and Findings

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis identify predictors of well-being by gender, in girls and boys (Table 01, Table 02).

For boys, the predictors of well-being are few and clear. Of all the dimensions of personality, emotional stability contributes the most to well-being: emotional distress (β = -.34), negative affect (β = -.33), life satisfaction (β = .21). Conscientiousness is a predictor for positive affects (β = .25) and autonomy is a predictor for emotional distress (β = .18). Regarding the parental strategies for the socialization of emotions, we should note the paternal influence: reward, as the response of the father to the boy's emotion of happiness, predicts both life satisfaction (β = .34) and positive affects (β = .31). A punishment-type response to the same emotion significantly predicts emotional distress (β = .30); and the proper management by the father of the emotion of fear in childhood (reward) falls into the category of predictors for life satisfaction (β = .29).

Of the emotional responses by the mother in the boys' childhood, managing the emotion of fear has a predictor value for negative affects; also punishment, as a response of the mother to the boy's manifestation of fear, has a negative influence on negative affect (β = -.21).

In the analysis of the predictors of the boys' well-being, the block of variables for the adult attachment style reveals exclusive significance of the father: trust, as an attachment style defined in the relationship with the father predicts both positive affects (β =.33) and life satisfaction (β =.34), while alienation has an almost similar impact on negative affect as emotional stability (β =.46).

In the case of boys, neither of the two emotion regulation strategies (expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal) has any predictive value for well-being.

As for girls, the well-being predictors are eclectic in nature (involving all dimensions of personality, and all the emotions analysed: anger, fear, sadness, happiness), i.e. the attachment styles for both parents and the two emotion regulation strategies.

All four dimensions of personality have relevance for positive affect: extraversion (β = .18), emotional stability (β = .15), autonomy (β = .14) and conscientiousness (β = .12). As the personality is relevant, the prediction of emotional distress, through these factors: emotional stability (β = -.34), extraversion (β = -.16) and autonomy (β = .11) is also relevant in this study. For girls, autonomy generates emotional distress (β =.11). Emotional stability is reflected in the prediction of negative emotions (it is the variable with the highest standardized coefficient value, β = -.49) and extraversion is associated with life satisfaction (β =.19).

Of all the parental strategies of socializing emotions, a vast majority involve the father. The reward-type response by the father both for the emotion of anger (β = -.20) and sadness (β = -.20) influences life satisfaction negatively. Managing the emotion of sadness is very relevant to life satisfaction in the case of girls: the neglect, as a response by the father, is negatively associated with life satisfaction (β = -.23), whereas amplification has a positive influence on life satisfaction (β =.15). The presence of the mother in the same dimension of well-being, i.e. life satisfaction, is relevant for two emotions; happiness and sadness: amplification of happiness (β = .19) and punishment of sadness (β = .17) prediction of life satisfaction. The prediction of girls' positive affects is significantly related to the management of the emotion of anger during childhood stage: the punishment of anger by the father and its amplification by the mother are positively correlated with positive affect. In the case of emotional distress, the only emotion that becomes a predictor is fear; thus, a reward-type response of the mother in the manifestation of fear during childhood fuels emotional distress in adolescence and youth (β =.18). In the case of negative emotions, none of the parenting styles for the socialization of emotions in childhood is a predictive factor.

Regarding the adult attachment style, alienation in the relationship with the father generates positive affects (β =.31), while alienation in the relationship with the mother predicts both negative affect (β =.18) and satisfaction (β =.16).

Both positive and negative affect are also predicted by the emotion regulation strategies enabled by girls: cognitive reappraisal predicts positive affect and expressive suppression predicts the negative ones Syntetic Model – Well-Being (in girls and boys).

Table 01. Summary of the results of the hierarchical regression analysis aimed at assessing the general well-being in girls (N = 347) and boys (N = 178)

	VARIABLES	Positive affects		Negative affects	
		Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Personality	Extraversion		.18**		
	Conscientiousness	.25**	.12**		
	Autonomy		.14**		
	Emotional stability		.15**	-.33***	-.49***
Parental style for socializing emotions	Punishment_Ang_F		.20**		
	Reward_Ang_F				
	Amplification_Ang_M		.15*		
	Avoidance_Ang_M				
	Reward_Ha_F	.31*			
	Punishment_Ha_F				
	Amplification_Ha_M				
	Reward_Fe_F				
	Reward_Fe_M				
	Punishment_Fe_F		-.14*		
	Punishment_Fe_M			-.21*	
	Avoidance_Fe_F	-.29*			
	Reward_Sa_F				
	Punishment_Sa_M				
	Neglect_Sa_F				
	Amplification_Sa_F				
Attachment	Trust_F	.33*			
	Trust_M				
	Alienation_F		.31***	.46***	
	Alienation_M				.18**
ER	CR		.14**		
	ES				.10*
	R² adjusted	.28	.33	.43	.47

*p< .05; **p<.01; ***p<.001;

Note: All the values for R² adjusted are significant for p<.01

Ang-Anger; Ha-Happiness; Fe-Fear; Sa-Sadness, M-Mother; F-Fathe

Table 02. Summary of the results of the hierarchical regression analysis aimed at assessing the general well-being in girls (N = 347) and boys (N = 178)

	VARIABLES	Emotional distress		Life satisfaction	
		Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Personality	Extraversion		-.16**		.19**
	Conscientiousness				
	Autonomy	.18*	.11*		
	Emotional stability	-.34***	-.43***	.21*	
Parental style for socializing emotions	Punishment_Ang_F				
	Reward_Ang_F				-.20*
	Amplification_Ang_M				
	Avoidance_Ang_M			-.22**	
	Reward_Ha_F			.34**	
	Punishment_Ha_F	.30*			.17*
	Amplification_Ha_M				.19**

	Reward_Fe_F			.29*	
	Reward_Fe_M		.18*		
	Punishment_Fe_F				
	Punishment_Fe_M				
	Avoidance_Fe_F				
	Reward_Sa_F				-.20*
	Punishment_Sa_M				.17**
	Neglect_Sa_F				-.23**
	Amplification_Sa_F				.15*
Attachment	Trust_F			.34**	
	Trust_M				.20*
	Alienation_F				
	Alienation_M				.16*
ER	CR				
	ES				
	R² adjusted	.46	.41	.45	.35

*p< .05; **p<.01; ***p<.001;
Note: All the values for R² adjusted are significant for p<.01
Ang-Anger; Ha-Happiness; Fe-Fear; Sa-Sadness, M-Mother

5. Conclusion

An important result of our study relates to the effect of personality, style of emotion socialization and attachment and emotion regulation strategies in the prediction power of several factors in the WB of individuals. From personality factors, emotional stability contributes the most to the variance of the predictive model and presents significant links to all four dimensions that operationalize well-being. For girls, emotional stability is the strongest predictor of negative emotions.

From all variables that measures the parental style for socializing emotions (forty), the analysis by gender variable emphasizes the role of the father in the boys' WB. Although for girls, the involvement of both parents in the management of all emotions is significant (with a greater focus on the sadness area); and the father's influence is particularly strong – the sadness neglect by the father is a negative predictor of life satisfaction.

In the case of adult attachment, for boys, the father is the exclusively significant parental figure. For girls, it is the attachment relationship with both parents that is relevant, but alienation with the mother has dual consequences: it is a positive predictor for both negative emotions and life satisfaction. The confusing attitude of girls in relation to the parents' emotional messages was also identified by Komarovsky (1985) who suggested that during adolescence stage, girls usually sends ambivalent messages seeking parental support, even when they do not actually need it. Good parenting means the involvement of both parents in a child's education. There was a time that the maternal figure was valued particularly, yet studies over the past thirty years has integrated the impact of the father. Hence, the data shown in this present research are an argument to this effect, and it reveals the significance of harmonizing the maternal and paternal responses.

Emotion regulation is a predictor for affects only for girls, both emotional regulation strategies are predictive variables; whereas for boys, none of the emotion regulation strategies analysed is a predictor.

Our results are reflected in other research that find significant differences between mans and women. Our results are reflected in other research that find significant differences between men and women. The women are more present in their emotional life: in most studies, women consistently report more negative emotions than men or higher positive affect and life satisfaction (Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991). Other studies show no gender differences in these aspects of WB at all (Okun & George, 1984) or varying gender differences across the life course (Shmotkin, 1990).

References

Aldao, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Schweizer, S. (2010). Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: A meta-analytic review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *30*, 217-237.

Armsden, G. C., & Greenberg, M. T. (1987). The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment Relationships to well-being in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *16*(5), 427-454. *Assessment, 17*, 138-149.

Baker, J. K., Fenning, R., & Crnic, K. (2010). Emotion socialization by mothers and fathers: coherence among behaviors and associations with parent attitudes and children's social competence. *Social Development*, *20*(2), 412-430.

Bariola, E., Gullone, E., & Hughes, E.K. (2011). Child and Adolescent Emotion Regulation: The Role of Parental Emotion Regulation and Expression. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review*, *14*(2), 198-212.

Boden, M., Westermann, S., McRae K., Kuo, J., Alvarez, J., Kulkarni, M., Gross, J., & Bonn-Miller, M. (2013). Emotion regulation and posttraumatic stress disorder: a prospective investigation. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *32*(3), 296-314.

Brief, A., Butcher, A., George, J., & Link, K. (1993). Integrating bottom-up and top-down theories of subjective well-being: The case of health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*, 646-653.

Canli, T., Ferri, J., Duman, E.A. (2009). Genetics of emotion regulation. *Neuroscience, 16*, 43-54.

David, D. (2009). *Profilul Distresului Emoţional*. Cluj Napoca: SC COGNITROM SRL.

Diener, E., & Ryan, K. (2009). Subjective well-being: a general overview. *South African Journal of Psychology, 39*, 391-406.

Diener, E., Emmons, R. A, Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*(1), 71-75.

Feist, G. J., Bodner, T. E., Jacobs, J. F., Miles, M., & Tan, V. (1995). Integrating top-down and bottom-up structural models of subjective well-being: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*(1), 138-150.

Fujita, F., Diener, E., & Sandvik, E. (1991). Gender differences in negative affect and well-being: The case for emotional intensity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 427-434.

Galinha, I., & Pais-Ribeiro, J. (2008). Structure and stability of subjective well-being: A structure equation modelling analysis. *Applied Research in Quality of Life, 3*, 293-314.

Galinha, I., & Pais-Ribeiro, J. (2011). Cognitive, affective and contextual predictors of subjective well-being. *International Journal of well-being, 2*(1), 34-53.

Greenberg, M. T., & Armsden, G. (2009). Inventory of parent and peer attachment (IPPA). Retrieved from http://prevention.psu.edu/pubs/documents/IPPAmanual0809.pdf

Gross, J. (2001). Emotion regulation in adulthood: timing is everything. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10*, 214-219.

Gross, J., & John, O.P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*, 348–362.

Haga, S., Kraft, P., & Corby, E. (2009). Emotion Regulation: Antecedents and Well-Being Outcomes of Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression in Cross-Cultural Samples. *J Happiness Stud, 10*, 271–291.

Horn, A., Possel, P., & Hautzinger, M. (2010). Promoting adaptive emotion regulation and coping in adolescence: a school-based programme. *Journal of Health Psychology, 16*, 258-273.

John, O. P., & Gross, J. J. (2004). Healthy and Unhealthy Emotion Regulation: Personality Processes, Individual Differences and Life Span Development. *Journal of Personality, 72*, 1301-1334.

Klimes-Dougan, B., Brand, A., E., Zahn-Waxler, C., Usher, B., Hastings, P., D., Kendziora, K., Garside, R., B., (2007). Parental Emotion Socialization in Adolescence: Differences in Sex, Age and Problem Status. *Social Development*, *16*(2), 326-342.

Komarovsky, M. (1985). *Women in College: Shaping New Feminine Identities.* New York.

Miclea, M., Porumb, M., Cotârlea, P., & Albu, M. (2009). *Personalitate şi Interese.* Cluj Napoca: COGNITROM.

Neumann, A., van Lier, A. C., Gratz, K. L., & Koot, H., M. (2010). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation difficulties in adolescents using the difficulties in emotion regulation scale.

Okun, M. A., & George, L. K. (1984). Physician- and self-ratings of health, neuroticism, and subjective well-being among men and women. *Personality and Individual Differences, 5*(5), 533-539.

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. (1996). Psychological well-being: meaning,measurement, and implications for psychotherapy research. *Psychother. Psychosom*, *65*, 14-23.

Schutte, N. S., Manes, R., & Malouff, J.M. (2009). Antecedent - Focused emotion regulation, response modulation and well-being. *Current Psychology, 28*, 121-31.

Shmotkin, D. (1990). Subjective well-being as a function of age and gender: A multivariate look for differentiated trends, *Social Indicators Research, 23*, 201-230.

Tan, M., & Karabulutlu, E. (2005). Social support and hopelessness in Turkish patients with cancer. *Cancer Nursing, 28*(3), 236-240.

Tomyn, A. J., Fuller Tyszkiewicz, M. D., & Norrish, J. M. (2014). The psychometric equivalence of the personal wellbeing index school-children for indigenous and non-indigenous Australian adolescents. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *15*(1), 43-56.

Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*(6), 1063-1070.

Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 52*, 30-41.