

OPINION

by Prof. Ergyul Tair Redzheb, DSc, PhD, Institute for Population and Human Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences regarding procedure for obtaining scientific degree „Doctor of Sciences“ in Higher education division 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field 3.2. Psychology (General Psychology – General and Development Psychology)
by Professor Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva, PhD,
dissertation topic: “Personality predictors of experienced well-being”

This opinion was assigned in accordance to a decision of the Scientific Jury, appointed with Order No. ПД-38-390/14.07.2023 by the Rector of Sofia university “St. Kliment Ohridski”. It is based on the documents required by the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRB), and the Rules for the Application of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (RAADSRB), including a copy of the dissertation, an extended abstract. From the documents provided, it is clear that Prof. Stefanova-Bakracheva has successfully passed the previous stages of the procedure for obtaining the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences” and meets the conditions for admission to defense. In connection with the procedure, all legally required materials and documents have been provided. A dissertation, an extended abstract and 18 (1 in press) scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation research are submitted for evaluation.

1. General impression of the dissertation

The dissertation submitted for evaluation, entitled “Personality predictors of experienced well-being” is an original and comprehensive study, that aims to explore the direct, mediated, and moderating effects of personality traits and personality dispositions on well-being and its components, and bring out the possibilities for promotion of personal resources to achieve optimal self-regulation. The 309-page dissertation has a classical structure, including a theoretical, methodological and analytical part, with a summary of the results, a conclusion and applications with the methods and results of the research. The list of references comprises 452 sources, including 423 in English and 29 in Bulgarian.

The theoretical part manages to synthesize the main constructs in the research model, dedicated to a widely studied topic in recent decades - well-being. Based on the results of the meta-analytic studies, the relationships between the individual components of well-being

are illustrated, and the relationships with personality traits from the Big Five Model, coping behaviors and coping potential, meaning in life, mindfulness, learned helplessness and self-sabotage are inferred.

The design of the study is clearly outlined, with the tasks and hypotheses of the study correctly stated. The study sample of 455 respondents, the research methods used to measure the 14 continuous variables, and the statistical analyzes applied (including factor, variance, correlation, regression, moderator, and mediator analysis) are described in detail.

The obtained results are correctly presented and interpreted, testifying to a direct and indirect effect of personal dispositions on the level of well-being experienced. Well-being is determined both on influence of personality traits and personal dispositions built in the course of self-regulation and adaptation to the environment. Personality traits have both a direct and moderating effect, and a mediated influence through their effect on personality dispositions. Traits, but more strongly dispositions, determine the personal adaptation potential and resource for development. The behavior was found to be significantly more predicted by situations than by traits, attesting to the changeable and dynamic nature of personality traits. The main emphasis of the study is the outlined impact of living conditions in a prolonged global crisis, which gives, in addition to a scientific and scientific-applied aspect of the study, the proposed model for considering the complex dynamic interaction between traits, dispositions and well-being. In summary, the specificity of the perceived environment and situation determines the universality of the response pattern under strong uncertainty and becomes a supra-individual pattern of adaptation versus adaptation to a familiar and predictable environment.

2. Significance and persuasiveness of the obtained results, interpretations and conclusions. Nature of scientific contributions

The empirical results obtained in Prof. Bakracheva's dissertation correspond to the raised theoretical theses, providing convincing evidence for the factors determining the experienced well-being. A number of scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation can be indicated, as being summarized in the following few main points. First, a holistic approach to the study of well-being and its components is applied, taking into account the complex impact of personality traits, personality dispositions, individual variables, and the environment. The derived model of interaction, determined by the characteristics of the environment - the conditions of the experienced crisis and its specificity

(duration, globality, unpredictability and existential significance), determine the context of individual reactions, oriented towards finding the most adaptive adjustment mechanisms.

Second, based on a generalization of the results on the role of personality traits in stable and unstable conditions, the universal effect of personality traits in predicting well-being is confirmed, taking into account the role of the environment. Specifically, under relatively stable conditions, with clear predictability in terms of consequences and duration, the interaction of personality dispositions and personality traits has a significant effect. Conversely, in conditions characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and unpredictability, as well as predetermining a universal pattern of adaptation, context prevails. It defines the framework in which individual choices are made, as stable personal dispositions also have a place in this process. The influence of the environment is analyzed based on the universal and personally determined reactions and on the perceived perspective. Accordingly, the experience of the crisis and the defining importance of the predictable outcome and expectations determine adaptive choices and self-regulation.

Third, a dynamic model of the interaction between factors determining well-being is proposed, which in the long run can be seen as a process of effective self-regulation. This self-regulation can be stimulated by learning as an improvement in the functioning of the personality, viewed as a cybernetic system. The heuristic potential of cybernetic theory is presented, justifying the position that the hierarchy of categories provides different opportunities for profiling and prediction depending on the goals set.

Finally, the summarized scientific contributions also have their possible applications for increasing the experienced well-being as part of the learning process and prevention of mental health. Directions are outlined for expanding the work in the perspective of learning effective models for personal functioning in the line of positive psychology. The stimulation of internal resources and capacity for effective self-regulation is seen as an important resource for long-term optimal functioning in the face of ongoing current or future crises.

3. Evaluation of the quality of the scientific works reflecting the dissertation research

In addition to the dissertation, 18 scientific publications are presented that promote the author's theses and empirical research in national and international publications on socially significant topics such as well-being, identity, self-esteem, etc. Some of them focus on methodological (e.g. adaptation of psychological tools) and educational (e.g. inclusive education, digital competences of teachers, pedagogical communication, etc.) problems,

while others consider applied aspects (e.g. effectiveness of coping strategies, effective self-regulation through learning, etc.). The abstract comprehensively presents the main ideas and contributions of the dissertation.

4. Conclusion

The dissertation and scientific publications submitted for evaluation represent systematized theoretical and empirical summaries on the personal and contextual factors determining well-being and individual adaptation, with its original scientific contribution. The dynamic model of well-being that emerges has both research and applied applicability at group and individual levels to support personal resources as part of the learning process. These possibilities for interventions and especially their applicability in the formal and informal educational process are particularly relevant in the conditions of uncertainty, characterizing the modern context. In addition, they contribute to the prevention of significant social problems related to the effective management of the environment and an active coping attitude.

Based on my positive assessment and the covered criteria laid down in the DASRB and the Rules for its application, I vote positively and propose to the members of the respected scientific jury to award Professor Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences” in professional field 3.2 Psychology (General Psychology - General and Development Psychology).

28.09.2023

Signature:

Prof. Ergyul Tair, DSc