

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OPTIMISM, SELF-ACTUALIZATION, RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING ON ACTIVE AND NON ACTIVE OLDERS

Jalal Shafaei¹, Somaye Saadati², Pouran Sabetkhah³ and *Adel Mirzaei⁴

¹*Department of General Psychology, Youth Researcher Club Member*

²*Department of Psychometrics (Assessment and Measurement)*

³*Department of Sport psychology, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran*

⁴*Sama Technical and Vocational Training College, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran*

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

Understanding and promoting positive aspects of well-being in older adults is important given the growing number of older adults. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between optimism, self-actualization, religious orientation and psychological well being on active and non active elders. The results indicate that positive significant relationship between optimism, self-actualization, and religious orientation with psychological well being on active and non active elders. Optimism, self-actualization, religious orientation can predict active elders and non active elders psychological well being.

Keywords: *Optimism, Self-actualization, Religious Orientation, Psychological Well Being*

INTRODUCTION

Understanding and promoting positive aspects of well-being in older adults is important given the growing number of older adults (Ferguson, 2010). Positive well-being has been conceptualized according to Ryff and colleagues (2004) and others (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Waterman *et al.*, 2008) as subjective (hedonic) well-being, which emphasizes happiness and pleasure; and psychological (eudaimonic) well-being, which focuses on the fulfillment of human potential. There is also growing empirical evidence for these two aspects of well-being being related but distinct (e.g., Compton *et al.*, 1996; Ryff and Keyes, 1995). Keyes *et al.*, (2002), for example, in both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses supported a higher order well-being factor with two distinct oblique factors: psychological and subjective well-being. The highest loading for subjective well-being (SWB) was positive affect and the highest for psychological well-being (PWB) was purpose in life. Similarly, McGregor and Little (1998) found two factors: subjective well-being (which included positive affect) and psychological well-being (which included purpose in life). Ryff *et al.*, (2004) have even found different biological correlates for these two aspects of well-being.

Dispositional optimism has been defined as the generalized expectation that a person will obtain good outcomes in life (Carver and Scheier, 2001). It is construed as a stable personality characteristic. The positive effects of optimism have been demonstrated across diverse stressful situations (see Lightsey, 1996; Scheier and Carver, 1985). Positive effects of optimism could either be mediated through positive coping strategies, for example, optimists use more problem-focused strategies, information seeking and positive reframing (Scheier *et al.*, 2001), or through psychosocial variables such as perceived social support and perception of control. Other researchers found positive significant relation between optimism and psychological well being (e.g. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Shahani *et al.*, 2005).

Several theories of personality development posit a highest stage that parallels Maslow's (1968) stage of self actualizing. Maslow (1968) also characterizes self-actualizing as the epitome of psychological health and well-being. However, most of the stage models of personality development—notably those that focus on structural, cognitive development (e.g., Loevinger, Kegan, and Fowler, but not necessarily Erikson)—

Research Article

do not deal with psychological health and well-being. The problem is that psychosocial maturity is neither empirically nor theoretically the same thing as well-being.

Empirically, research shows consistently that higher levels of psychosocial maturity do not correlate with higher levels of well-being (e.g., Bauer and McAdams, 2004a, 2004b, 2010). In other words, on average, people who score at higher relative to lower stages of maturity are not more likely to score higher on measures of well-being.

Allport (1950) distinguished between a mature religiosity and an immature one. Mature religiosity was associated to the integration and organization of personality, consistent morality, and flexible and complex cognitive style, all this opposed to fanaticism and rigidity of thought. On the contrary, Allport related immature religiosity with self-gratification, which did not contribute to the integration of personality or self-reflection. Later, Allport and Ross (1967) distinguished two religious orientations: intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic orientation involves: the experience of religion as an end in itself and as a fundamental reason for life, the consideration of religion as an axis and absolute discretion in personal decisions, it is inclusive and source of existential sense, and it involves the internalization of the belief system, which is in harmony with the rest of the needs, these being considered less important though. Ultimately, intrinsic religiosity implies to live religion as a value and meaning. On the contrary, the extrinsic implies that religion is a means to achieve one's interest and personal purposes (security, social status, entertainment, self-justification, life-style support, etc.). The belief system is superficially sustained and selectively fulfilled to meet more pragmatic and beneficial needs, and then it is purely utilitarian and instrumental (Allport and Ross, 1967).

Allport considered both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity as mutually exclusive, corresponding to the mature and immature religiosity, respectively. A sign of the maturity of the intrinsic orientation would be its negative relationship with prejudice, enmity, contempt, and intolerance, as opposed to the extrinsic, which is positively related with these attitudes (Allport, 1966; Allport and Ross, 1967). In this regard, Garcia and Valero (2013) found a positive relationship between the intrinsic orientation and the psychological well-being measures except for Autonomy, (2) a negative relationship between the extrinsic orientation and Autonomy, and (3) a negative relationship between the quest orientation, Self-acceptance and Purpose in life. Therefore, the present study question is there significant relationship between optimism, self-actualization, religious orientation and psychological well being on active and non active alders?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participant

The population of the study consisted of all older men and women in Bilehsavar city. The sample size was 377. The sample was selected through multiple random cluster sampling method.

Measures

Optimism Scale. Optimism was measured using the Life Orientation Test – Revised (LOT-R) (Scheier *et al.*, 1994). The LOT-R consists of 10 items (four of which are fillers). Three items reflect an optimistic disposition, for example: “In uncertain times I usually expect the best.” The reliability of this questionnaire was reported 0.84 by Scheier and Carver (1987).

Self-actualization: Self-actualization was measured using Ahvaz Self-actualization scale (Esmailkhani *et al.*, 1998) that was adopted from Lester 50 item Self-actualization Scale. This scale consists of 25 items with 3 point Likert Scale. In the current study, two of the three subscales showed acceptable levels of internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alphas of .92.

Religious Orientation: Religious Orientation was measured using the Islamic Religiosity Scale (Bahrami, 2005). This scale consists of 64 items with 5 point Likert Scale. In the current study, two of the three subscales showed acceptable levels of internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alphas of .91.

Psychological Well-Being: Psychological Well-Being was measured using Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB; Ryff, 1989a, 1989b). This scale consists of 29-item scale Likert-type (1 = Strongly disagree, 6 = Strongly agree) that assesses the psychological wellbeing understood as personal

Research Article

development and commitment to the existential life challenges. It works through six scales: Self-acceptance (positive attitudes toward oneself), Positive Relations (warm, trusting interpersonal relations and strong feelings of empathy and affection), Autonomy (self-determination, independence, internal locus of control, individuation, and internal regulation of behavior), Environmental Mastery (ability to choose or create environments suitable to his or her psychic conditions), Personal Growth (continuing ability to develop one's potential, to grow and expand as a person), and Purpose in Life (clear comprehension of life's purpose, sense of directedness, and intentionality).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the results of table 1 indicate the means scores of active older in optimism, self-actualization, religious orientation, psychological well being is higher than non active older.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation of Optimism, Self-actualization, Religious Orientation, Psychological well being

Variables	Active older		Non Active older		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Optimism	62.55	11.24	32.42	8.47	47.46	9.74
Self-actualization	21.50	8.02	10.61	5.21	15.81	10.23
Religious Orientation	18.98	10.92	14.57	7.09	16.76	8.97
Psychological well being	25.64	9.27	11.21	6.29	18.41	7.76

As the result of table 2 indicates all of predictor variables have correlation with psychological well being so that among these variables optimism for active older (0.64) and religious orientation for non active (0.31) indicate highest correlation.

Table 2: Correlation coefficient between Optimism, Self-actualization, Religious Orientation, Psychological wellbeing

Variables	Psychological well being					
	Active older		Non Active older		Total	
	R	N	R	N	R	N
Optimism	0.64	146	0.21	231	0.54	377
Self-actualization	0.44	146	0.18	231	0.38	377
Religious Orientation	0.53	146	0.31	231	0.43	377

The results of table 3 indicate that optimism, self-actualization, religious orientation could predict psychological well being in older people.

Table 3: The results of multiple Enter regression to prediction of psychological well being on both groups

	R ²	df	Mean of R ²	F	Sig
Prediction	14312.46	3	7106.14	79.44	0/000***
Remain	33924.64	371	89.71		
Total	48237.1	376			

***0.001

According to table 4 olders that have higher optimism, self-actualization and religious orientation more likely have higher psychological well being.

Research Article

Table 4: Results of regression coefficients

Predictor variables	B	SE	β	t	Sig
Optimism	0.45	0.05	0.47	5.94	0/000***
Self-actualization	0.14	0.12	0.24	2.52	0/000***
Religious Orientation	0.09	0.26	0.18	2.11	0/000***

***0.001

The results of table 5, 6 indicate that in the first step optimism correlation coefficient is 31% and can predict 19% of psychological well being on non active olders. Then, in the second step self-actualization correlation coefficient is 34% and can predict 22% of psychological well being on non active olders. Ultimately, correlation coefficient of religious orientation is 37% and can predict 26% of psychological well being on non active olders.

Table 5: Stepwise multiple regression between Optimism, Self-actualization, Religious Orientation, Psychological wellbeing on non active olders

Predictor variables		R ²	df	Mean of R	F	Sig
Optimism	Prediction	7962.36	1	7962.36	79.44	0/000***
	Remain	22980.32	229	100.29		
Self-actualization	Prediction	9235.73	2	4617.81	46.47	0/000***
	Remain	21716.04	228	95.15		
Religious Orientation	Prediction		3			0/000***
	Remain		227			

Table 6: The results of regression coefficients for non active olders

Independent variable	Predictor variables	regression coefficients	R ²	B	SE	β	t	Sig
psychological well being	Optimism	0.31	0.19	0.38	0.09	0.34	4.90	0/000***
	Self-actualization	0.34	0.22	0.36	0.16	-0.23	2.31	0/000***
	Religious Orientation	0.37	0.26	0.32	0.06	0.21	3.64	0/000***

Table 7: Stepwise multiple regression between predictor variables and psychological well being on active olders

Predictor variables		R ²	df	Mean of R	F	Sig
Optimism	Prediction	4294.12	1	4294.12		
	Remain	12995.76	144	89.26	47.60	0/000***
Self-actualization	Prediction	5279.85	2	2638.42		
	Remain	12010.03	143	82.10	31.44	0/000***
Religious Orientation	Prediction		3			
	Remain		142		27.31	0/000***

Research Article

Table 8: The results of regression coefficient for active elders

Independent variable	Predictor variables	regression coefficients	R ²	B	SE	β	t	Sig
psychological well being	Optimism	0.50	0.24	0.67	0.18	0.34	2.41	0/000***
	Self-actualization	0.53	0.27	0.51	0.08	-0.20	2.31	0/000***
	Religious Orientation	0.57	0.32	0.19	0.04	0.14	3.64	0/000***

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between optimism, self-actualization, religious orientation and psychological well being on active and non active elders. The results of this study indicate that there is positive significant relationship between optimism with psychological well being on active and non active elders. In other words, with increase of optimism scores psychological well being scores is increase and it means that elders with high optimism more likely have less psychological problems. Also, optimism was predictor of psychological well being on active and non active elders so that optimism can predict 24% active elders and 19% non active elders psychological well being. This result is in line with the results of Scheier *et al.*, (2001), Seligman and Sikszenmihalyi (2000) and Shahani *et al.*, (2005).

The results of this study indicate that there is positive significant relationship between self-actualization with psychological well being on active and non active elders. It means that with increase of self-actualization scores psychological well being scores is increase and it means that elders with high self-actualization more likely have less psychological problems. Also, self-actualization was predictor of psychological well being on active and non active elders so that self-actualization can predict 27% active elders and 22% non active elders psychological well being. This result is in line with the results of Maslow (1950).

The other result of this study was the positive relationship between religious orientation and psychological well being on active and non active elders. In fact, with increase of religious orientation scores psychological well being scores is increase and it means that elders with high religious orientation more likely have less psychological problems. Also, religious orientation was predictor of psychological well being on active and non active elders so that religious orientation can predict 32% active elders and 26% non active elders psychological well being. This result is in line with the results of Garcia and Valero (2013). In general, it could be concluded that although there is positive significant relationship between variables on active and non active but for psychological well being on active and non active elders optimism, self-actualization and religious orientation have had prediction roles, again, religious orientation was greater predictor of psychological well being on active elders.

REFERENCES

- Allport GW (1950). *The Individual and his Religion* (Macmillan) New York, NY.
 Allport GW and Ross JM (1967). Personal religious orientation and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **5** 432-433.
 Bahrami E (2005). The relationship between psychological well being. *Iranian Psychologists* **5** 42-35.
 Bauer JJ and McAdams DP (2004a). Growth goals, maturity, and well-being. *Developmental Psychology* **40** 114-127.
 Bauer JJ and McAdams DP (2004b). Personal growth in adults' stories of life transitions. *Journal of Personality* **72** 573-602.
 Bauer JJ and McAdams DP (2010). Eudaimonic growth: Narrative growth goals predict increases in ego development and subjective well-being three years later. *Developmental Psychology* **46** 761-772.
 Compton WC, Smith ML, Cornish KA and Qualls DL (1996). Factor structure of mental health measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **71** 406-413.

Research Article

Ferguson S and Goodwin A (2010). Optimism and well-being in older adults: the mediating role of social support and perceived control. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* **71**(1) 43-68.

García-Alandete JY and Bernabé-Valero G (2013). Religious Orientation and Psychological Well-Being among Spanish Undergraduates, [*Orientaciones religiosas y bienestar psicológico de los estudiantes universitarios españoles*] *Acción Psicológica* **10**(1) 135-148.

Keyes CLM, Shmotkin D and Ryff CD (2002). Optimizing well-being: The empirical encounter of two traditions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **82** 1007-1022.

Lightsey OR (1996). What leads to wellness? The role of psychological resources in well-being. *The Counseling Psychologist* **24** 589-735.

Maslow AH (1950). Self-actualizing people: a study of psychological health. *Personality* **1** 11-34.

Maslow AH (1968). *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Van Nostrand Reinhold) New York, NY.

McGregor I and Little BR (1998). Personal projects, happiness and meaning: On doing well and being yourself. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **74** 494-512.

Ryff CD, Singer BH and Love GD (2004). Positive health: Connecting wellbeing with biology. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* **359** 1383-1394.

Ryff CD (1989a). Happiness is everything, or is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **57** 1069-1081.

Ryff CD (1989b). Beyond Ponce de Leon and Life Satisfaction: New Directions in Quest of Successful Aging. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* **12** 35-55.

Ryff CD and Keyes CLM (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **69** 719-717.

Ryan RM and Deci EL (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic & eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology* **52** 141-166.

Scheier MF and Carver CS (1985). Dispositional optimism and physical well-being: The influence of generalized outcome expectancies on health. *Journal of Personality* **55** 169-210.

Scheier MF and Corver CS (2001). Optimism pessimism, and psychological wellbeing. In: *Optimism and Pessimism: Implications for Theory Research and Practice*, edited by Change EC, Washington DC: American Psychological Association 189-216.

Seligman M and Sikszenmihalyi M (2000). Positive psychology: An Introduction. *American Psychologist* **55** 5-14.

Shahani-Yeilagh M, Movahed A and Shekarshekan H (2005). Religion, optimism, mental health and somatic health Persian. *Journal of Psychological Shahid Chamran University* **11**(3) 19-34.

Waterman AS, Schwartz SJ and Conti R (2008). The implications of two conceptions of happiness (hedonic enjoyment and eudaimonia) for the understanding of intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Happiness Studies* **9** 41-79.