

Summary

The Pattern of Stable Personality in Predicting the Subjective Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital

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The concept of positive psychology, instead of mental dysfunction or disease metaphor, refers to strengths and virtues of people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This positive development perspective has increased the significance of some concepts as resilience, coping, psychological capital, and optimal functioning. The concept of subjective well-being that is considered to be counterpart of “happiness” in psychological science is one of the prominent issues for optimal functionality.

There are two principal approaches to define the subjective well-being. One of them is the hedonic view equating subjective well-being with pleasure or happiness. This view defines the subjective well-being with positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction (Diener & Lucas, 1999). The other eudaimonic view, focusing on the potential of individual suggests that well-being is beyond happiness. This view refers to psychological well-being and advocates the opinion of using individual’s true potential (Ryff & Singer, 2000). In this sense psychological well-being together with happiness is functionalized with different variables as meaningfulness (McGregor & Little, 1998), self realization and energetic (Ryff, 1989).

Theories of well-being can be divided in three separate groups in the literature: need or goal satisfaction theories, process or activity theories, and genetic or personality theories (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2009). The main argument of need or goal satisfaction theories is minimization of tensions for achieving the happiness. Contrary to need or goal satisfaction theories the process or activity theories suggest that happiness is not a desired consequence state, instead it is merely an engagement in an activity. Different from those theories the genetic or personality theories presume that construct of well-being involves a continuity component.

The questions as to “who is the happy person?”

and “how can these people be identified?” are main discussions of the well-being literature. Genetic or personality theorists intended to explore which personality traits play basic role in these processes with using big five personality. McCrae (2002) indicated that almost 25% of total variance of well-being can be explained with personality characteristics. Some studies showed that subjective well-being has positive relations with extroversion, agreeableness, and negative relations with neuroticism (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; De Beurs et al., 2005; Eid & Diener, 2004, Vitterso & Nilsen, 2002). In the light of these findings first hypothesis of the research constructed as below:

Hypothesis 1: Extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to development will increase, and neuroticism will decrease subjective well-being.

The process or activity theories concentrate on the situational characteristics of subjective well-being. Hobfoll’s (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory makes a connection between subjective well-being and situational factors. This theory propose that people aspire to obtain and reserve material (e.g., physical environment, objects), social (e.g., relationships, support), and psychological (e.g., positive self-regard, optimism) resources, and they are stressed with the threat of losing these resources or being lack of these resources after making crucial investments (Hobfoll, 2002). Psychological capital with showing positively-oriented situational capacity of people can be considered to be one of those psychological resources for understanding the structure of well-being (Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004). Psychological capital’s sub-dimensions of hope, self efficacy, optimism and resilience indicate people’s improvable and alterable positive resource that supporting personal development and workplace performance (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Studies have represented that there are positive relations among well-

being and optimism (Eid & Diener, 2004; Smith, Young, & Lee, 2004), self efficacy (Lent et al., 2005), resilience (Britt, Adler, & Bartone, 2001; Ferris, Sinclair, & Kline, 2005), and hope (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Snyder, Ritschel, Rand, & Berg, 2006). Moreover some scholars (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010; Avey, Wernsing, & Mhatre, 2011) found a significant positive relation between well-being and psychological capital. The second hypothesis of the research based on the above results is formulated as indicated below.

Hypothesis 2: Psychological capital will increase subjective well-being.

We also anticipated mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between personality and subjective well-being. The underlying concept of this assumption is that as personality refers the stable dispositions of the people in time, psychological capital including state-like property varies according to the conditions and contexts. It was thought that personality can be as a distal and psychological capital can be as a proximal intraindividual variable in predicting the subjective well-being. In addition to that there may a relationship between personality as stability aspects of the subjective well-being in time and psychological capital that shows the situational or momentary state of the subjective well-being. Some findings; presenting the role of the personality in explaining the psychological capital, and also showing the relationship between psychological capital and well-being as part of positive functionality (Youssef & Luthans, 2009; Avey, Wernsing, & Mhatre, 2010) indicate that psychological capital may play a mediator role in this process. Starting from this point the third hypothesis of research that investigate the indirect effects of stable personality on the subjective well-being with both the effects of situational and stable personal characteristics presented as below.

Hypothesis 3: Psychological capital will play a mediator role in the relations between big five personality and subjective well-being.

The main purpose of this study was to explore the effects of the big five personality and psychological capital on the subjective well-being, and also to seek for the mediating role of psychological capital in this process.

Method

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 361 employees (39% female and 61% male) working in different positions in a cargo firm from Turkey. We separated the collection of prediction and criterion variables to minimize same source bias issues. The independent variables as big five personality, psychological capital and demo-

graphic information were included in the survey battery in the first administration and then merely the dependable variable as subjective well-being was administered after twelve days. Marital status of the sample is 61% married ($n = 220$), 33% single ($n = 118$) and 6% is ($n = 23$) divorced.

Instruments

Subjective Well-Being. Subjective well-being was measured with using Andrews and Withey's (1976) Faces Scale. This bipolar scale includes seven different faces that visually represent "very happy" and "very sad" expressions on the both sides. This face expressions scale measures the present and general well-being using 7 point likert type. Lower scores represent lower levels of well-being. We asked the participants to answer the question of "Which face comes closest to expressing how you feel about your life as a whole?". The average well-being score of total participants was of 5.83 ($S = 1.48$).

Big Five Personality. Personality was measured with using Benet-Martinez and John's (1998) Big Five Personality Scale that was translated into Turkish in a cross-cultural study (Schmitt, Allik, McCrae, & Benet-Martinez, 2007). The scale includes total of 44 items with five sub-factors as extroversion, agreeableness, openness to development, consciousness and neuroticism. The reliability and validity of the scale were proved in some national studies (Basim, Çetin, & Tabak, 2009; Sümer, Lajunen, & Özkan, 2005). We conducted confirmatory factor analysis with AMOS version 20.0 program for validity and found the same factor structure with 38 items (indiscriminant 6 items were deleted). The factor loadings of the scale ranged between .48 to .74 ($\chi^2/df = 2.64$, RMSEA = .079, TLI = .89, CFI = .92). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the sub dimensions were calculated as .75 for openness to development, .68 for consciousness, .77 for extroversion, .65 for agreeableness and .71 for neuroticism.

Psychological Capital. Psychological capital was measured with using Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans et al. (2007) and translated into Turkish culture by Çetin and Basim (2012). The scale includes 24 items with four sub-dimensions as hope, optimism, resilience and self efficacy. The validity and reliability of the scale were supported in some national studies (Çetin, 2011; Çetin, Hazır & Basim, 2013). We performed confirmatory factor analysis for validity and found the same four-factor structure. The factor loadings of 21-item scale (items 1, 8 and 11 were deleted for the discriminant validity) ranged between .42 to .67 ($\chi^2/df = 2.89$, RMSEA = .071, TLI = .91, CFI = .93). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the sub dimensions were .75 for resilience, .79 for hope .71 for optimism and .69 for self efficacy.

Results

Firstly, the premise of normality, linearity and homogeneity of variance of the collected data were provided. Then we conducted correlation analysis to determine the presumed relations between variables, and we used structural equation modeling with observed variables for testing the research hypothesizes. Moreover we investigated the significance of the indirect effects between variables for the mediational relations.

The results of correlation analysis showed that there were positive relations among subjective well-being and psychological capital ($r = .386, p < .01$), conscientiousness ($r = .354, p < .01$), extroversion ($r = .435, p < .01$), openness to experience ($r = .353, p < .01$), and agreeableness ($r = .431, p < .01$), and there was negative relations between subjective well-being and neuroticism ($r = -.418, p < .01$). Further we found positive relations among psychological capital and conscientiousness ($r = .441, p < .01$), extroversion ($r = .490, p < .01$), openness to experience ($r = .551, p < .01$), agreeableness ($r = .573, p < .01$), and negative relations between psychological capital and neuroticism ($r = -.616, p < .01$).

We used structural equation modeling for testing the research hypothesizes with using maximum likelihood estimating method. The results of the analysis showed that subjective well-being is predicted by merely three personality characteristic as extroversion ($\beta = .23, p < .01$), agreeableness ($\beta = .11, p < .05$), and neuroticism ($\beta = -.11, p < .05$). These findings indicated that people who are extrovert, high in agreeableness and low in neuroticism, have also high level of subjective well-being. Our first hypothesis was partly supported.

We investigated the role of psychological capital in explaining the subjective well-being with the second hypothesis. The results showed that there is significant positive relation between psychological capital and subjective well-being ($\beta = .39, p < .01$). This finding supported the second hypothesis that people's psychological capital influences positively their subjective well-being.

The third hypothesis of the research intended to test the mediator role of the psychological capital in the relationship between big five personality and subjective well-being. We followed Shrout and Bolger's (2002) suggestions that exploring the significant indirect effects between independent and dependent variables with the help of mediator variable. We also used bootstrapping procedures and created 2000 bootstrapping samples with Monte Carlo technique to determine the significant indirect effects (bootstrap confidence interval was 95%) in the relations between big five personality and subjective well-being (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The results revealed that

extroversion has significant indirect effects on the subjective well-being over the psychological capital [standardized indirect effect = 0.013, Standard deviation of the mean = 0.006, Confidence intervals (0.036, 0.009), $p < .001$, Confidence intervals of the Monte Carlo model (0.033, 0.008)]. Moreover significant Sobet test statistics (z value is 2.027, $p < .05$) confirmed the mediational relations. All these findings partially endorsed the third hypothesis showing the mediator role of the psychological capital in the relationship between extroversion and subjective well-being.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the influences of big five personality and psychological capital on subjective well-being. The findings showed that there are not only direct effects of personality and psychological capital, but also indirect effects of the extroversion on the subjective well-being with the mediating role of the psychological capital.

Studies focusing on the stable personality and subjective well-being showed that extroversion and neuroticism relatively have more explanatory power to predict subjective well-being. DeNeve and Cooper (1998) found that extroversion and agreeableness is positively, and neuroticism is negatively correlated with the subjective well-being. Similarly De Beurs et al. (2005) determined strong relations among high neuroticism, negative affect, deficiency of positive emotions and anxiety. Moreover a meta-analysis also found that extroversion is strongly correlated with the positive and pleasant emotions (Lucas & Fujita, 2000). Our findings that extroversion and agreeableness are positively, and neuroticism is negatively correlated with the subjective well-being supported these results mentioned above. With supporting the genetic or dispositional viewpoint these evidences also contributed the assumption that people react to the different life events with stable dispositions.

Another finding of this research was the direct effects of psychological state on the subjective well-being. Some studies indicated that people who see themselves more positive have also higher levels of self perception (Schuettler & Kiviniemi, 2006), more positive expectancy (Brown, 1984), and set themselves higher objectives (Baron, 1990). Focusing on the sub dimensions of the psychological capital some studies found similar relations. Optimism was determined as a significant variable in explaining several aspects of positive and negative well-being (Eid & Diener, 2004; Smith, Young, & Lee, 2004). Self efficacy was found as an important factor for clarifying the positive well-being (Bandura, 1997, Lent et al, 2005). Resilience was directly related to well-being (Britt et al., 2001, Ferris et al., 2005). Hope was positive-

ly associated with the positive well-being, and negatively related with the negative well-being (Park et al., 2004, Snyder et al., 2006). Moreover Avey et al. (2010; 2011) proposed that there is positive relationship between psychological capital and well-being. Our results supporting the previous findings showed that psychological capital has a positive impact on well-being. This finding also promoted the assumption that psychological states play significant role in the subjective well-being.

Furthermore we explored the mediator role of psychological capital in the relationship between personality and well-being. The underlying reason of this assumption was based on the opinion that one of the predictors of situational psychological states is stable personality characteristics by considering both personality and psychological states have an effect on well-being. The results of the mediation analysis indicated that extroversion has indirect effect on the subjective well-being over the mediating role of psychological capital. This finding showed that extroverts not only have high level of psychological capital but also have high level of subjective well-being through increased positive psychological states. Thus, from the intraindividual perspective determining the relationship between personality as distal variable and psychological capital as proximal variable in explaining the subjective well-being enabled

to support the connections between genetic or personality theories and activity or process theories.

Although our findings showed that both personality and psychological capital predict subjective well-being with the mediator role of psychological capital, several limitations are worth considering. One of them was related with the sample that limits the generalizability. Qualitatively and quantitatively differentiated samples may increase the generalizability of the findings. Using a single source was another limitation of this study. Although the data were collected different intervals concerning the independent and dependent variables, the results may be relatively influenced by social desirability and common method variance. Lastly the cross sectional nature of the study may limit the causal relations among intraindividual variables. The longitudinal data gathering designs can be more useful for confirming the mentioned casual relations.

Ultimately, subjective well-being is not only an indicator about people's own feelings and cognitions about their life but it also demonstrates the quality of the social life and social health. It is becoming increasingly significant for future studies to explore the contextual and cultural effects associated with the personal and psychological characteristics in the subjective well-being processes.