

Summary

Being Part of Society: Internalized Values and Cognitive Well-Being

Fatih Özdemir¹

Bursa Uludağ University

Researchers in the literature have frequently examined the positive relationship between being part of a social group and life satisfaction (cognitive well-being) using Social Identity Theory and the concept of in-group identification. This positive relationship is explained by the benefits of social group membership, such as making sense of social life, finding a purpose or fulfilling needs for security and social support (Cohen, 2004; Wakefield et al., 2017; Wilson et al., 2007). However, high levels of in-group identification also have been associated with negative psychological outcomes such as depersonalization (e.g., Hatvany, Burkley, & Curtis, 2017). Considering these different findings in the literature, the Identity Fusion Theory (e.g., Buhrmester et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2011; Özdemir & Özkan, 2020; Swann et al., 2014), which is used to explain social group-based processes and differs from Social Identity Theory in that it suggests that individual-based and group-based identities can be simultaneously salient and interrelated, was tested as the main approach in this study. Accordingly, this study, which was conducted with university students who define their ethnic identity as Turkish, examines the possible positive relationship between identity fusion with Turkish identity and life satisfaction.

Studies in the literature mostly focus on the direct relationships between social group-based processes and life satisfaction via simple, multivariate or hierarchical regression analyses and do not provide sufficient information about the actual process, ignoring possible indirect relationships. This study tests the mediating role of internalized positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture, identified as “interrelational orientation” and “sexism” in the pilot study, using path analysis.

Another point is that significant gender-based differences in the variables tested in this study have been identified in previous studies. For example, studies in Turkey have shown that women have a collective per-

spective and a relational self and internalize relational values more than men (e.g., İmamoğlu, Günaydın, & Selçuk, 2011; İmamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 1999; 2004). In addition, studies on sexism have shown that men have stronger hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes than women, or that both women and men may exhibit high levels of benevolent sexist attitudes (e.g., Sakallı-Uğurlu, 2002; Sakallı-Uğurlu & Özdemir, 2017). In particular, the findings that benevolent sexism may not differ by gender can be explained by women’s low level of awareness of gender issues. In order to support the validity and reliability of the measurement tools and findings in this study, gender-based differences and their consistency with the literature findings were tested. Considering the findings of the literature, the hypotheses tested in this study are listed as follows:

Hypothesis 1. There will be significant gender-based differences on variables of life satisfaction, identity fusion with Turkish society, interrelational orientation, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism. More specifically, compared to men, women will have more positive cognitive evaluations of their own lives, stronger identity fusion with Turkish society, and higher interrelational orientation to be in contact with other people. In addition, men will have stronger hostile sexist and benevolent sexist attitudes than women.

Hypothesis 2. Identity fusion with Turkish identity will increase the internalization of positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture (interrelational orientation and sexism, respectively) which in turn support life satisfaction. More precisely, people with higher scores on identity fusion with Turkish society will have a greater tendency to be in contact with other people and have stronger hostile sexist and benevolent sexist attitudes, and in this case, their cognitive well-being which includes cognitive evaluations for their own lives will be at higher levels.

Pilot Study Method

Participants

A total of 364 undergraduate students who identified their ethnic identity as Turkish participated in the study. There were 257 females (70.6%) and 107 males (29.4%). The ages of the participants ranged between 18 and 33, with a mean age of 22.24 ($SD = 2.80$).

Measures

Open-Ended Cultural Value Questions. Two open-ended questions were developed in the study to identify positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture. These questions are "In your opinion, what are the positive prevalent values in Turkish culture?" and "In your opinion, what are the negative prevalent values in Turkish culture?"

Cultural Value Pool. A cultural value pool of 42 values was used to determine the extent to which the tested values were perceived to be related to Turkish culture. Participants stated the relationship between each value and Turkish culture using a 7-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate that the value is perceived as related to Turkish culture.

Procedure

After the approval by Middle East Technical University (METU) Ethics Committee, research data were collected online using *QUALTRICS* software. It took an average of 20 minutes to complete the measurement inventory, and for their contribution students received bonus points to be added to their final grades.

Results

The participants were asked what the positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture were with open-ended cultural value questions. Hospitality ($n = 228$), helpfulness ($n = 226$) and being in contact (related) with other people ($n = 191$) were found to be the most frequently specified positive values, whereas sexism ($n = 233$), male-domination ($n = 201$), and zealotry / narrow mindedness ($n = 122$) were the most frequently expressed negative values in the sample of 364 participant. Positive and negative values and their frequency of expression are presented in Appendix Table 1.

In order to determine whether a meaningful grouping of values was possible, 42 values in the cultural value pool were tested using exploratory factor analysis. Analysis findings suggested a 2-factor structure; $KMO = .92$, $\chi^2(861) = 7127.62$, $p < .001$. When the 19 values, loaded to the first factor, were examined, it was noticed

that there were similar values stated to be negative by the participants in the open-ended cultural value questions. Therefore, the first factor was named "Negative values". In this factor, which explained 26.97% of the variance with .82 internal consistency reliability, patriarchal values (.75), attributed active and primary roles to man (.75), male-domination (.74), attributed passive and secondary roles to woman (.71), conservatism (.70), zealotry / narrow mindedness (.67), superstitious beliefs (.66), and aggression (.65) were the values with the highest item loading scores, respectively. Secondly, it was found that the 23 values, loaded to the second factor, mostly consisted of the values stated to be positive in open-ended cultural values questions, therefore this factor was called as "Positive values". In the second factor, which explained 12.36% of the variance with .91 internal consistency reliability, respect to older people (.71), familial ties (.68), helpfulness (.67), morality (.66), trust (.65), loyalty (.64), honesty (.61), and harmony (.60) were the values with the highest item loading scores, respectively. Cultural value pool items and their mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Appendix Table 2.

As emphasized before, the pilot study was conducted to determine positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture which would mediate the relationship between identity fusion with Turkish society and life satisfaction in the main study. Accordingly, (i) the frequency of expression of the values stated in open-ended cultural value questions, (ii) mean and standard deviation scores of tested values in cultural value pool, and (iii) loading scores to "positive values" and "negative values" factors were considered. The positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture that were expressed most frequently by participants and had the highest mean and item loading scores were determined as "interrelational orientation" and "sexism", respectively.

Main Study Method

Participants

Since the values determined in the pilot study will be tested in the main study, the consistency between the samples of the two studies was taken into consideration and 433 undergraduate students who identified their ethnic identity as Turkish participated in this study. There were 290 females (67%) and 143 males (33%). The ages of the participants ranged between 18 and 31, with a mean age of 21.56 ($SD = 2.46$). The extent to which "relational" and "patriarchal" values are perceived to be related to Turkish culture was asked to the participants using 7-point Likert type and single-item scales ranging from "strongly not related" to "strongly related". The mean scores for these variables

were 5.58 ($SD = 1.27$) and 5.01 ($SD = 1.97$), respectively in the sample of female participants; while the mean scores for males were 4.83 ($SD = 1.66$) and 4.71 ($SD = 1.81$).

Measures

Satisfaction with Life Scale. The 5-item scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985; $\alpha = .87$) to measure the individual differences in cognitive evaluations of one's life and adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991; $\alpha = .89$). In this study ($\alpha = .95$), higher scores indicate the cognitive evaluations of individual about own life as positive, and the level of life satisfaction is higher.

Identity Fusion Scale. The 7-item scale developed by Gomez et al. (2011; $\alpha = .83$) and adapted into Turkish by Özdemir and Özkan (2020; $\alpha = .92$) was used to test an individual's identity fusion with a social group. In this study ($\alpha = .89$), higher scores indicate a high level of identity fusion with Turkish society.

Balanced Integration-Differentiation Scale. The 29-item scale, developed by İmamoğlu (1998; 2003) in the Turkish sample, includes two sub-factors namely, interrelational orientation (16-item; $\alpha = .80$) and self-developmental orientation (13-item; $\alpha = .74$). In this study ($\alpha = .89$), interrelational orientation sub-factor was used to test the participant's tendency to be in contact (related) with other people, and higher scores indicate a stronger interrelational orientation.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. In order to measure the negative attitudes towards women and the supportive approach towards traditional gender roles, the 22-item scale was developed by Glick and Fiske (1996) with two sub-factors namely, hostile sexism (11-item; $\alpha = .80$) and benevolent sexism (11-item; $\alpha = .73$). The scale was adapted into Turkish by Sakallı-Uğurlu (2002) ($\alpha = .87$, $\alpha = .78$, respectively). In this study ($\alpha = .94$, $\alpha = .92$, respectively), higher scores show stronger hostile-sexist and benevolent-sexist attitudes.

Procedure

After the approval by METU Ethics Committee, the research was announced in non-departmental elective courses opened in the psychology department of METU for students who studying other undergraduate programs. The research data were collected through *QUALTRICS* software. Participants completed the measurement inventory in approximately 35 minutes, and received bonus points to be added to their final grades.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Multivariate analysis of variance with bootstrap

technique (5000 resampling) was performed to test gender-based group differences (*Hypothesis 1*) and it was found that gender had a significant overall effect ($F(7, 425) = 15.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .20$). Significant gender-based group differences were found in life satisfaction ($F(1, 431) = 19.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$), interrelational orientation ($F(1, 431) = 8.51$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$), benevolent sexism ($F(1, 431) = 14.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$), hostile sexism ($F(1, 431) = 60.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$), and the perceived importance of relational values in Turkish culture ($F(1, 431) = 27.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$). According to these findings, which are consistent with the first hypothesis, compared to men, women's cognitive evaluations for their own lives were more positive, and their interrelational orientations to be in contact with other people were higher. In addition, compared to women, men had stronger hostile sexist and benevolent sexist attitudes.

Considering the other preliminary findings, life satisfaction was positively related to identity fusion with Turkish society, interrelational orientation, and benevolent sexism in both female and male participant samples. Moreover, identity fusion with Turkish society had positive relationships with the variables of interrelational orientation, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism. Preliminary findings in both samples are presented in Table 1.

Mediational Model Testing

The proposed mediational model (*Hypothesis 2*) was tested with path analysis using LISREL 9.10 program. As indicated in Figure 1, the internalization of positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture (interrelational orientation and sexism, respectively) fully mediated the relationship between identity fusion with Turkish society and life satisfaction ($B = .15$; $SH = .03$; $t = 5.96$). According to this finding, which is consistent with the second hypothesis, people with higher identity fusion with Turkish society had stronger interrelational orientation and benevolent sexist attitudes which in turn supported the individual's life satisfaction. Also, identity fusion with Turkish society positively predicted hostile sexist attitudes, but the relationship between hostile sexism and life satisfaction was not significant. The proposed mediational model indicated a good fit into the data; $\chi^2(2, n = 433) = 4.04$, $p = .133$, $\chi^2/df = 2.02$, GFI = .99, AGFI = .97, NFI = .99, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .05, %90 GA [.00, .118] and explained 24% of variance on life satisfaction variable.

Discussion

This study, which was conducted with participants who identified their ethnic identity as Turkish, examines

the relationship between identity fusion with Turkish society and life satisfaction (cognitive well-being) based on the Identity Fusion Theory; and tests the mediating role of internalized positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture. The expected gender-based group differences (*Hypothesis 1*) and the proposed mediational model (*Hypothesis 2*) were supported by research findings.

Depending on the data collected in the pilot study using "open-ended cultural value questions" and "cultural value pool" measures and tested with frequency, mean and exploratory factor analyses, "interrelational orientation" and "sexism" were perceived by the participants as positive and negative prevalent values in Turkish culture. Previously conducted studies indicated that interrelational orientation and relational values (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; 2011; İmamoğlu & İmamoğlu, 1992; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1984; 1990; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & İmamoğlu, 2002) and sexism and patriarchal values (e.g., Glick, Sakallı-Uğurlu, Ferreira, & DeSouza, 2002; İlkkaracan, 1998; Sakallı-Uğurlu & Özdemir, 2017; Sakallı-Uğurlu, Türkoğlu, & Kuzlak, 2018) are the main values in Turkish culture. Thus, it can be stated that the determined values in the pilot study and the findings in the literature are consistent.

Gender-based group differences were tested and compared with the findings in the literature in order to support the judgment regarding the validity and reliability of the measurement tools and the findings obtained. Compared to men, women's cognitive evaluations for their own lives were found to be more positive, and their interrelational orientations to be stronger. These findings are supported by previous studies which highlight the women's relational self (e.g., İmamoğlu, Günaydın, & Selçuk, 2011; İmamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 1999; 2004). On the other hand, men indicated stronger hostile sexist and benevolent sexist attitudes than women, and these are consistent with previous studies, conducted with university students (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Özkan & Lajunen, 2005; Sakallı-Uğurlu, 2002). The verified hypothesis 1 and supportive literature findings on gender-based group differences support the reliability and validity of the research.

According to the path analysis confirming hypothesis 2, as identity fusion with Turkish society increased, the tendency to be in contact (related) with other people and benevolent sexist attitudes strengthened and this situation supported the life satisfaction (cognitive well-being). The mediational model has indicated that when people perceive themselves as part of society, the internalized prevalent cultural values positively support individuals' cognitive appraisals of their lives, even when the value is negative. This may be explained by the bene-

fits of identity fusion with a social group and internalized positive or negative prevalent social group-based values, such as making sense of social life or satisfying security and social support needs (e.g., Cohen, 2004; Gomez et al., 2017; Swann et al., 2009; Wakefield et al., 2017; Wilson et al., 2007). However, no significant relationship was found between hostile sexism and life satisfaction although identity fusion with Turkish identity positively predicted hostile sexism in the mediational model. The insignificant association between hostile sexism and life satisfaction may bring to mind that researchers should not only focus on the positive or negative nature of the values, but also pay attention to their perceived severity. Due to the high educational level of the participants, they may have a high level of awareness of the negative effects of hostile sexism in society, and this may explain the insignificant finding. Therefore, the perceived severity of positive or negative values should be considered by future studies.

It is useful to specify the limitations of the research. First, data of the pilot study and the main study were collected with the participation of undergraduate students, and the research findings reflected the responses of educated individuals. In order to generalize the research findings, future studies should include samples other than university students. For example, the relationship between hostile sexism and life satisfaction may be significant in data that includes participants with low levels of education and low awareness of gender issues, as expected. Another limitation of the study is that the proposed relationships and the mediational model were tested with only two values. In order to generalize the findings, future studies should test the proposed relationships with other positive or negative prevalent values in Turkish culture such as nationalism, religiosity, conservatism, patriotism, national independency, and right-wing or left-wing socio-political orientations. Lastly, due to the correlational nature of the pilot and the main studies, readers should avoid making any causal judgments about the relationships between the variables tested.