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Psychological and Social well-being: the mediated role of values

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Several authors have studied the relationship between well-being and values, highlighting that it is partially determined by personal values that prevail in social environment (Basabe et al., 2002; Lima & Novo, 2006; Paéz & Zubieta, 2004; Sagiv, Roccas & Hazan, 2004; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000). Such studies are usually oriented to subjective well-being, while there is a lack of researches focused on psychological and social well-being dimensions. In order to analyze the mediated role of values in psychological and social well-being, a correlational study was carried out- non experimental transversal design. A convenience sample was used composed by 1062 participants (33.6% males- 66.4% females, ageâ¯Mâ¯=26.73;â¯SD=10.01)from Argentina.
Based on previous correlation analysis, eleven regressions (stepwise method) were carried out introducing values as psychological and social well-being dimensions predictors. Self-transcendence and openness to change values had significant betas in almost all psychological and social well-being dimensions while conservation values had a negative effect on positive relations with others, autonomy, personal growth, social acceptance and social coherence and self-promotion values on autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth and social contribution.

Mots-clés :

Introduction

Several studies show the relationship between well-being indicators and values (cf. Bilbao, 2008), highlighting that well-being depends upon congruence between personal values and the prevailing value environment (Basabe et al., 2002; Páez & Zubieta, 2004; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Sagiv, Roccas & Hazan, 2004). Bilbao, Techio and Páez (2007) found a significant association between personal values and subjective well-being: self-transcendence and openness to change as well as conservation, but with less intensity, are positively associated with greater well-being.

Lima and Novo (2006) emphasize the contextual and social determinants of subjective well-being; however researches focused on psychological and social well-being dimensions are still scarce.

Psychological well-being's studies are interested in the personal development of individuals, their style to face life challenges, their efforts and desires to achieve goals (Ryff, 1989). According to Ryan and Deci (2001), it emphasize the process and achievement of those values that make individuals feel authentic and alive, which makes them grow as people and individuals rather than to activities that provide pleasure or avoid pain.

Also, Ryff (1989) proposed a multidimensional model to operationalize psychological well-being, which consists of six dimensions:

1) *Self-acceptance*: Refers to positive attitude towards oneself and past life, to understand and accept the good and bad aspects each one has.

2) *Positive relations with others*: It's the ability to generate reliable, warm and satisfying bonds with others. Also, feel empathy, affection and intimacy, in order to identify, understand and maintain deep relationships with one another.

3) *Autonomy:* Means to be self-determinant, independent and self-regulated. It is the ability to carry on autonomous actions and not be influenced by others.

4) *Environmental mastery*: It's the ability to choose or create favorable environments in order to satisfy needs and take advantage of opportunities.

This provides a sense of control over events.

5) *Purpose in life*: Means to make sense of directedness and intentionality in experiences, both present and past and understand the purpose of your life. It has to do with possessing goals in life.

6) *Personal Growth*: Indicates interest in developing one's potential, grow as a person and maximize the different capacities. It's being able to know oneself and to see improvements over time.

On the other hand, Keyes (1998) defines social well-being as people's valuation of their circumstances and functioning in society. The author identifies five dimensions that make up this concept:

1) *Social integration*: Refers to sense of belongingness, to the extent to which individuals feel part of the groups and society in which they live.

2) *Social acceptance:* Means one's degree of comfort and acceptance of the positive and negative aspects of our own lives, but also the trust, approval and positive attitudes toward others.

3) *Social contribution*: Is understood as the sense of value to society, the feeling you can contribute something valuable to the common good.

4) *Social actualization*: It's confidence in the future of society, belief in progress and social change, sense of continued growth and development in social institutions and society.

5) *Social coherence*: Refers to the ability to perceive quality, organization and functioning of the social world, to find a logic meaning to events.

As regards values, Schwartz (1994) defines them as "desirable transsituational goals, varying in importance that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity" (p. 21). Values have different functions, they: a) serve the interests of some social entity, b) can motivate action, by giving it direction and emotional intensity, c) work as standards for judging and justifying action, and d) are acquired through socialization to dominant group values and through the unique learning experiences of individuals. According to the author, the type of motivational goal that each value pursues differentiates ones from another. Ten motivationally different types of values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism) were derived from three universal requirements with which all individuals and societies must deal with: needs of individuals as biological organisms, requisites of coordinated social interaction, and requests for a good functioning and survival of groups. Thus, Schwartz (1992) finds that the value system can be represented by a circle so, the structure according to which the values â□□â□□are sorted reflects the relationships of conflict and congruence between the motivations underlying the ten values. Schwartz (1994) organized the values in two bipolar dimensions. First, the author contrasts the values of Openness to Change and Conservation value types. This dimension opposes values emphasizing independent thought and action and favoring change (self-direction, stimulation and hedonism) to those emphasizing submissive self-restriction, preservation of traditional practices, and protection of stability (security, conformity, and tradition). The second dimension contrasts higher order Self-Enhancement and Self-Transcendence value types, which opposes values emphasizing the pursuit of one's own relative success and dominance over others (power and achievement) to those emphasizing acceptance of others as equals and concern for their welfare (universalism and benevolence). Hedonism is related both to Openness to Change and to Self-Enhancement.

Closer to our time, Schwartz (Fontaine, Poortinga, Delbeke & Schwartz, 2008) proposes an alternative but complementary approach to conceptualize the same two-dimensional structure. He distinct values â□□â□□that regulate the expression of the personal interests and characteristics -centered person: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement and power- versus those governing relations with others and the effects on them -focused on the social: universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security. At the same time, groups values â□□â□□in those expressing self-expansion without concern -growth values: self-direction, universalism, benevolence, stimulation and hedonism- versus those expressing self worriedly protection valuesâ□□â□□: security, power, achievement, conformity and tradition

Data reported by previous local studies (Zubieta & Delfino, 2010; Zubieta, Muratori &

Fernandez, 2012; Zubieta Fernández & Sosa, 2012) show good levels of general well-being but a higher average on psychological well-being than social. Goals that give meaning to life and environment allow deploy potentiatilites and feel utility. However, at context level, deficitaries levels show up when perceiving quality and organization of society. Regarding values, self-trascendence and openness to change orientations appeared as those associated with a better psychosocial well-being.

In this frame, current study objective is to analyze the mediator role of values in well-being.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample was used, composed by 1062 persons, 66.4% of them were female. Their mean age was 26.73 years (*SD*= 10.01, range 17-66). They belonged to Buenos Aires city (21.1%) and surroundings (22.6%) and others cities of Argentina (54.1%, mainly Córdoba, Salta and Mendoza).

Instrument

Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire that included the following instruments:

Psychological well-being scale (Ryff, 1989; Diaz et al., 2006). Evaluate private assessment criteria of a good psychological functioning. 29 items with continuous response from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), measures six dimensions or positive attributes of psychological well-being: self-acceptance (*In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.* Cronbach's alpha= .79, 6 items), positive relations with others (*I know I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.*α= .80, 6 items), autonomy (*I have confidence in my opinions even if they are contrary to the general consensus.* α= .70, 8 items), environmental mastery (*I generally do a good job of taking care of my personal finances and affairs.* α= .60, 6 items), personal growth (*I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.*α= .68, 7 items) and purpose in life (*I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself*. α= .78, 6 items).

Social well-being scale. (Keyes, 1998; Blanco & Díaz, 2005, 33 items version). It operationalizes how much individuals see themselves thriving in their social life. The scales with a representative item in parentheses are: social integration (*I feel close to other people in my community*. α= .86, 6 items), social-acceptance (*People do not care about other peoples' problems*. α= .83, 8 items), social contribution (*My daily activities do not create anything worthwhile for my community*. α= ,79, 6 items), social actualization (*Society isn't improving for people like me*. α= ,65, 6 items), and social

coherence (*I cannot make sense of what's going on in the world*. α= ,54, 6 items). On a scale from one (totally disagreed) to five (totally agreed), respondents described how they functioned (i.e., thought or felt). Negative items (20 out of 33) were reversed-coded.

Human values questionnaire (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2001). It consists of 21 items that describe people characteristics (scale 1-6, e.g. *Having new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things originally and his own way*). It gives two dimensions of values: self-transcendence (α= .64, 5 items) vs. self-promotion (α= .74, 4 items) and conservation (α= .64, 6 items) vs. (α= .71, 6 items).

Procedure

Participants were asked to answer the scales either during their university courses or, in the case of parents and family members, through an interview with psychology students.

Data analysis

Based on previous correlation analysis, a number of stepwise regressions were carried out by means of SPSS 21.0. Specifically eleven sets of regressions were carried out, introducing values as psychological and social well-being dimensions predictors.

Results

Based on previous correlation analyses, six regressions (stepwise method) were carried out, introducing values as psychological well-being's predictors, and five regressions (stepwise method), introducing values as social well-being dimensions predictors (see Table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Correlations between psychological well-being dimensions and values

Note. ** $p < .01$

Table 2: Correlations between social well-being dimensions and values

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

As shown in Table 3, values expressing self-expansion without concern- openness to change and self-transcendence- contribute to explain all psychological well-being

dimensions. Also, openness to change appears in first place for all dimensions except for autonomy. Secondly, when values expressing self worriedly protection show up, they negatively predict psychological well-being in the case of self-promotion, and positively in conservation values.

Table 3: Stepwise regressions for psychological well-being

Note. Coefficients between parentheses are standardized betas (ß).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.
a Adjusted *R2*= .063. *F* (2, 991)= 34.44; *p*= .00. b Adjusted *R2*= .060. *F* (3, 980)=21.90; *p*= .00. c Adjusted *R2*= .122. *F* (4, 973)= 34.98; *p*= .00. d Adjusted *R2*=.045. *F* (3, 989)= 16.63; *p*= .00. e Adjusted *R2*= .197. *F* (4, 978)= 61.07; *p*= .00. f Adjusted *R2*= .103. *F* (3, 991)= 38.85; *p*= .00.

As regards social well-being dimensions, as shown in Table 4, self-transcendence and openness to change appear in all dimensions except for actualization in the former, and acceptance in the latter. Self-promotion values have only a negative predictor force in contribution, while conservation values in acceptance and coherence.

Table 4: Stepwise regressions for social well-being

Note. Coefficients between parentheses are standardized betas (ß).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.
a Adjusted *R2*= .064. *F* (2, 987)= 34.79; *p*= .00. b Adjusted *R2*= .031. *F* (2, 974)=16.70; *p*= .00. c Adjusted *R2*= .119. *F* (3, 993)= 46.78; *p*= .00. d Adjusted *R2* = .008. *F* (1, 966)= 8.73; *p*=.00. e Adjusted *R2*= .057. *F* (3, 993)= 19.92; *p*= .00.

Discussion

Current study's findings show strong relationships between well-being and values, corroborating that the former is partially determined by personal values that prevail in social environment. Also, psychological and social well-being are related with motives concerned basically with personal growth but also in the balance between person-focused and social-focused values and, in a lesser extent, with protection values.

Conservation values are positively associated with only one psychological well-being's dimension: purpose in life, which mean that tradition, conformity and security increase the sense of directedness and intentionality in life. However, these values â□□â□□decrease psychosocial well-being as are negatively associated with autonomy, personal growth, social acceptance and social coherence which indicate the relevance of self-determination and the maximation of capacities in the two formers, plus the

approval and positive attitudes toward others, and the need of perceiving organization and functioning of the social world in the two latters.

Regarding self-promotion, values which reinforce individuality, status over nature and persons, and emphasis in owns goals, are not positively associated with any dimension of well-being. Surprisingly, people who value power and achievement diminish the perception of control and directedness over events and experiences, and show less personal autonomy. Also do not belief they can provide something valuable to society.

Self-transcendence, values which priorize harmony and concerns for others, appears in almost all dimensions of well being, except for social actualization. This exception is coherent with previous findings (Zubieta & Delfino, 2010; Zubieta, Muratori & Fernández, 2012; Zubieta et al., 2012) that stress a deficit in argentine social environment to transmit confidence in the future of society, a sense of continued growth and development in social institutions. The strongest associations are with personal growth and social contribution, which mean that satisfied relational needs and gregariousness provide a sense of value and confidence in one's potential and capacities.

Finally, values which emphasize independent thought and action and favoring change –openness to change- are those with stronger relationships with psychological and social well-being, especially with the first one. Personal growth is most associated with this value, followed by purpose in life, self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery and ultimately with positive relationships with others. As regards social well being, it exist a strong association with social contribution, which would point that values â□□â□□of openness to change provide a sense of utility and value to society. Also, is the only value which provides confidence in the future of society and belief in progress and social change.

Results are in line with the findings of Bilbao, Techio and Páez (2007) and previous local study (Zubieta et al., 2012) that exhibited that self-transcendence and openness to change values, as well as conservation, but with less intensity, are positively associated with greater well-being. In regards Fontaine et al. (2008) new complementary values model, values governing relations with others, focused on the social (universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security) combined with self-expansion and growth motives (self-direction, stimulation and hedonism, again with universalism and benevolence) is the profile which better contributes to a psych-sociological well-being.

Empirical studied as reported in this text allow going further in the comprehension of social well-being from a psych-sociological perspective. Even when is based on a not probabilistic but convenience sample, systematic replication of studies as well as the integration of different associated variables and analysis contribute to highlight the relevance of well-being understood as relational and context dependent.

Findings exposed in the article are the product of a first step in going deeper in a process of analysis that take into account the weight of different associated variables in

psych-sociological well-being explanation.

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