

Review of the thesis entitled: “Psychological predictors of subjective well-being (on the example of Chinese students)” written by Xu Yidan
THESIS for the Candidate of Psychological Sciences Degree

The issue of subjective well-being and its relation to other psychological factors is an important research area of psychology. This is due to the fact that, on the one hand, subjective well-being determines to a large extent the individual and social functioning of an individual, and on the other hand, it is connected with personality during developmental processes. For this reason, the significant value of Xu Yidan’s thesis for the Candidate of Psychological Sciences Degree should be emphasized. Xu Yidan undertook to check the structure of subjective well-being and define its main psychological predictors. The empirical research carried out by the author is undoubtedly innovative and valuable, constituting an interesting academic study.

1. Research aim of the dissertation

The main aim of the study was to identify the relative contribution of the psychological factors of personal potential and the imbalance of the significance and accessibility of personal values to Chinese students’ subjective well-being. This research approach, properly formulated by the Author, is very valuable and important because it enables the analysis of the existing links in the perspective of personality traits. Moreover, the research approach proposed in the thesis reveals the specificity of points of contact and divergence between psychological factors related to personal potential, which may indicate adaptive or non-adaptive relationships of subjective well-being with personality based on general personality changes.

As part of the research problem, the author correctly formulated 4 research hypotheses, which reflected the aim of the research:

1. Chinese students with a higher level of the subjective well-being show higher indexes of components of the personality potential and lower indexes of the imbalance of

personal values in terms of significance and accessibility, as compared to students with a lower level of the subjective well-being.

2. Positive predictors of the subjective well-being are components of the personality potential: the self-efficacy, components of resilience, the dispositional optimism, and the preference of problem-focused coping strategies. Negative predictors are the internal conflict and the internal vacuum, which characterize the imbalance of personal values in terms of significance and accessibility.

3. There are both common and specific for men and women predictors of the subjective well-being from the number of components of the personality potential and of indexes of the imbalance of personal values in terms of significance and accessibility.

4. Components of the personality potential exert joint positive influence, and indexes of the imbalance in the values' sphere exert joint negative influence on the subjective well-being of students.

The research aim of dissertation was carried out on the basis of empirical research, which – it should be strongly emphasised – was conducted sensibly and thoroughly. The selection of research groups, application of appropriate statistical methods, elaboration of results and formulated conclusions indicate a high evaluation of the author's scientific workshop.

2. Structure of the dissertation and the substantive assessment

The dissertation consists of three chapters, as well as introduction, references, and annexes. The structure of the work, which fully corresponds to the model of empirical works used in psychology, is most suitable for the purpose of the undertaken research, as it allows for an in-depth and objective examination of the assumed relationships on the basis of theoretical analyses and empirical verification of the hypotheses made.

Chapter 1 describes the theoretical basis of the study about psychological predictors of subjective well-being of Chinese students. The author correctly depicted subjective well-being as a subject of psychological research and personality potential and personal values as factors of subjective well-being. The main factors influencing the subjective well-being are: objective (genetic predisposition; social and demographic factors; economic factors; social and political factors; life events; ecology; social environment, and others) and subjective (psychodynamic characteristics, personal traits, meaningfulness of life, value orientations and others). The subjective characteristics explain the variability of the subjective well-being to a greater

extent than objective life conditions. Chapter 2 presented research methods and organization of the study. The following methods were used: Index of Well-Being, Index of General Affect (Campbell et al, 1976), Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al,1985), Life Orientation Test, the General Self-Efficacy Scale» (R.Schwarzer, 1995), Hardness Scale for Chinese Adults, Copying Style Questionnaire, The Value-Accessibility Ratio in Various Life Areas. Chapter 3 outlined the results of an empirical research of psychological predictors of subjective well-being of Chinese students

Generally, analysing the contents of the theoretical part, it should be undeniably stated that they are characterized by great maturity and insight, which is visible in precise and concrete formulations and conclusions. The author did not remain only on the level of simple presentation of concepts and research results, but was able to creatively and constructively juxtapose different research perspectives, reinterpret them thoroughly and draw interesting conclusions. In the empirical part the author presented the results of statistical analyses in a scientifically "elegant" way based on a wide range of statistical methods: correlations, difference tests, regression analysis, and structural models. This part deserves strong praise for the reliability and maturity of statistical calculations.

However, despite many positive aspects and inputs, there are some shortcomings and weak points in the dissertation:

- 1) There should have been a clear distinction between subjective well-being and psychological well-being in Chapter 1.
- 2) While describing studies of personal values the author should have referred to Schwartz' theory of values which identifies ten motivationally distinct values and further describes the dynamic relations amongst them. The theory has greatly influenced modern research on values.
- 3) The regression analyses could have taken into account the variable "gender".
- 4) The name 'Rokich' (p.334, 335) should be spelled 'Rokeach'.

3. Formal aspects of the dissertation

From the formal point of view, the work is written correctly and deserves relatively high grades. The author has applied all requirements related to writing her thesis in a highly reliable manner. The list of literature, as well as the execution of footnotes, drawings and tables, and the annex deserve a very positive assessment. The extensive literature on the subject, which was correctly selected and used in the paper, should also be emphasized. It

proves the author's skillfulness in the "thicket" of scientific information. The author was able to skillfully use various types of sources, appropriately ranking the available information and at the same time not exceeding the rules of proper interpretation, i.e. avoiding too generalised or over-interpreted results of previous research. Moreover, the graphic side is done carefully - this applies mainly to tables and charts, which clearly and transparently illustrate the conducted statistical analyses. Some mistakes are present in References, e.g. I do not understand why the author did not cite the full pages of some articles, Schwartz, S.H., Bilsky, W. Toward a universal psychological structure of human values //Journal of personality and social psychology. – 1987. – Vol. 53. – №. 3. – Pp. 550 or, Steel, P., Schmidt, J., Shultz, J. Refining the relationship between personality and subjective well-being //Psychological bulletin. – 2008. – Vol. 134. – №. 1. – Pp. 138.

4. Final assessment

To sum up the evaluation of the thesis for the Candidate of Psychological Sciences Degree Xu Yidan, it should be stated that the dissertation is characterized by reliability and thorough research skills. Particularly noteworthy is the research conducted on the psychological predictors of subjective well-being and its relations with personality traits and value system, as well as their good statistical elaboration and psychological interpretation. This proves that the student has mastered the principles of scientific methods used in psychology well, is able to conduct scientific research and thoroughly interpret the obtained data. The dissertation presented by the author makes a contribution to research in the field of psychology, especially in the field of positive psychology. Moreover, it has significant practical value for the professional activity of psychologists.

On the basis of the review of the presented dissertation, after its methodological, content-related and formal evaluation, I would like to state that it deserves a positive assessment and meets the requirements set for a thesis for the Candidate of Psychological Sciences Degree. Therefore, I propose that Xu Yidan be admitted to further stages of the exam.

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