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Summer August 9, 2018

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/andrea-walker/29/
Life Satisfaction, Flourishing, and Hope as a Function of Social Connectedness with a Metropolitan Community

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Introduction

Within the positive psychology literature, life satisfaction, flourishing, and hope are considered important constructs associated with psychological well-being. Yet, less is known about the antecedents of any of these constructs, nor about their causal relationship to one another. Thus, this study sought to test a theoretical model of social connectedness (SC) to a metro area as a driver of life satisfaction leading to greater flourishing and hope.

1. Relationship between social connectedness to life satisfaction

Life satisfaction captures the cognitive assessment that one has attained important goals in life. Previous research has found that SC relates positively to life satisfaction (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011; Kok & Fredrickson, 2010; Lee, Dean, & Jung, 2008; Riedl, Köbler, Goswami, & Kromka, 2013). Moreover, SC to mainstream society has also been found to strongly predict life satisfaction (Yoon, Lee, & Goh, 2008).

2. Relationship between life satisfaction to flourishing and hope

Flourishing is a global measure of well-being that, per goal theory, should be positively influenced by goal attainment. If so, flourishing would flow from life satisfaction. Moreover, hope involves the appraisal that a person knows how to reach one’s future goals, and is based in part on the assessment of past successes (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2005). Thus, when we have been successful in attaining our goals in life, we expect to continue being successful, and thus we are hopeful. Though hope is typically measured as a predictor, the above theory suggests that hope results from life satisfaction, and thus may also be a consequence of SC to a metro area via life satisfaction as a mediator.

The Current Study

Based on the theories described above, the current study’s aim was to test a path model of SC to a metro area as an antecedent to life satisfaction, leading to greater flourishing and hope (See Figure 1).

Methods

The study was conducted as a part of a data collection effort for a municipal government organization in the United States to assist in program development. Participants were adults ranging in age between 18-64. The data was collected via a survey distributed online using the sampling software Qualtrics.

Scales. SC was measured with an adjusted Social Connectedness Scale (Yoon, Jung, Lee, & Felix-Mora, 2012). Life satisfaction was measured with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Flourishing with the Flourishing scale (Diener, et al., 2009), and hope with the Dispositional Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). All scales have consistently exhibited internal consistency across samples and have been validated by correlations in the expected directions with other variables of well-being.

Data Analysis. The proposed relationships between variables was tested using covariance based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) and Maximum likelihood (ML) estimations. ML estimations were supplemented with bootstrapping (N = 5000) of the proposed “indirect effects” of the model. Finally, the power of the model to predict its respective endogenous variables was assessed with Squared Multiple Correlations (R²).

Results

Figure 1: Empirical Values of the Model of Best Fit (N = 206)

Basic demographics of the participants (N = 206) were as follows: (Gender: 64% female; 27% male 58%), (Race: 77% White, 23% Minority) and (Age in years: M=47.7 and S.D. = 15.63).

CB-SEM results indicated the proposed model produced good “fit” according to standard indices. The preferred model included “indirect effect only”, or “full mediation.” Indirect effect only mediation is considered the strongest in support of a causal relationship between variables (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). The empirical values of the ML estimations were as follows: χ² = 629.075; df = 294; p = <.001; RMSEA = .07; 90% CI: .067, .083; CFI = .908; SRMR = .065. The bootstrapping analysis (N = 5000) further supported the significance of the indirect effects of the proposed model: indirect effect of SC to flourishing (β = .09, 95% BCa CI [.192, .034]) and indirect effect of SC to hope (β = .226, 95% BCa CI [.372, .117]). The model was also a robust predictor of the endogenous variables of life satisfaction, hope, and flourishing. (See Figure 1)

Conclusion

Our results are consistent with the theory that social connectedness is an important driver to the wellbeing variables of life satisfaction, hope and flourishing.

While social connectedness has previously been linked to wellbeing, the current study adds to the literature in two important ways. First, the results suggest that life satisfaction, flourishing, and hope have social origins, and that policy makers in metro areas interested in promoting wellbeing should consider the promotion of social connectedness as a desired outcome of municipal governance. Second, the research suggest mechanisms of SC, which in this case may be the perception that one’s metro area is conducive to personal achievement.

References