

EXTRACTED DRAFT FROM PROJECT

Ethical personality is happy personality

There is no person who won't be happy. Even those, who wish to be punished for their sins, see the punishment as a tool leading to the happiness. Very long ago, the ancient philosophers like Democritus and Aristotle already claimed that the happiness is the main goal of human life. Physical and mental well-being was, is and will be the most important thing in the eyes of many people. Other ancient thinkers also explicitly associated well-being with the ethical behaviour. As Sophocles said, it is better “to fail with honour than succeed by fraud”. Is it true, that ethical behaviour makes people happy and that unethical behaviour brings unhappiness? In our times, facing a lot of egoism and utilitarianism on every step, we may seriously question this opinion.

However, the scientific research convincingly demonstrates that the realisation of the values and ethical standards in the actual behaviour really increases the happiness and well-being. The more you feel that your values are fulfilled in your behaviour, the higher you rate your well-being or happiness, or vice-versa, people with higher well-being or happiness report also higher fulfilment of values in the actual behaviour. In a recent study, we tested the relationship between the personality, the values and the personal well-being (including happiness, satisfaction with life, positive relations with others, purpose in life, personal growth, mastery of environment, sense of autonomy and self-acceptance). It is well-known, that the personality is the strongest predictor of well-being beside the major stressful events. Much less is known about the connections between the values and well-being. That was the reason for the study being performed on the sample of 948 participants of both sexes in the age span from 18 to 64 years. In the study, the relationships between three groups of variables, personality variables, value dimensions and dimensions of well-being were thoroughly investigated.

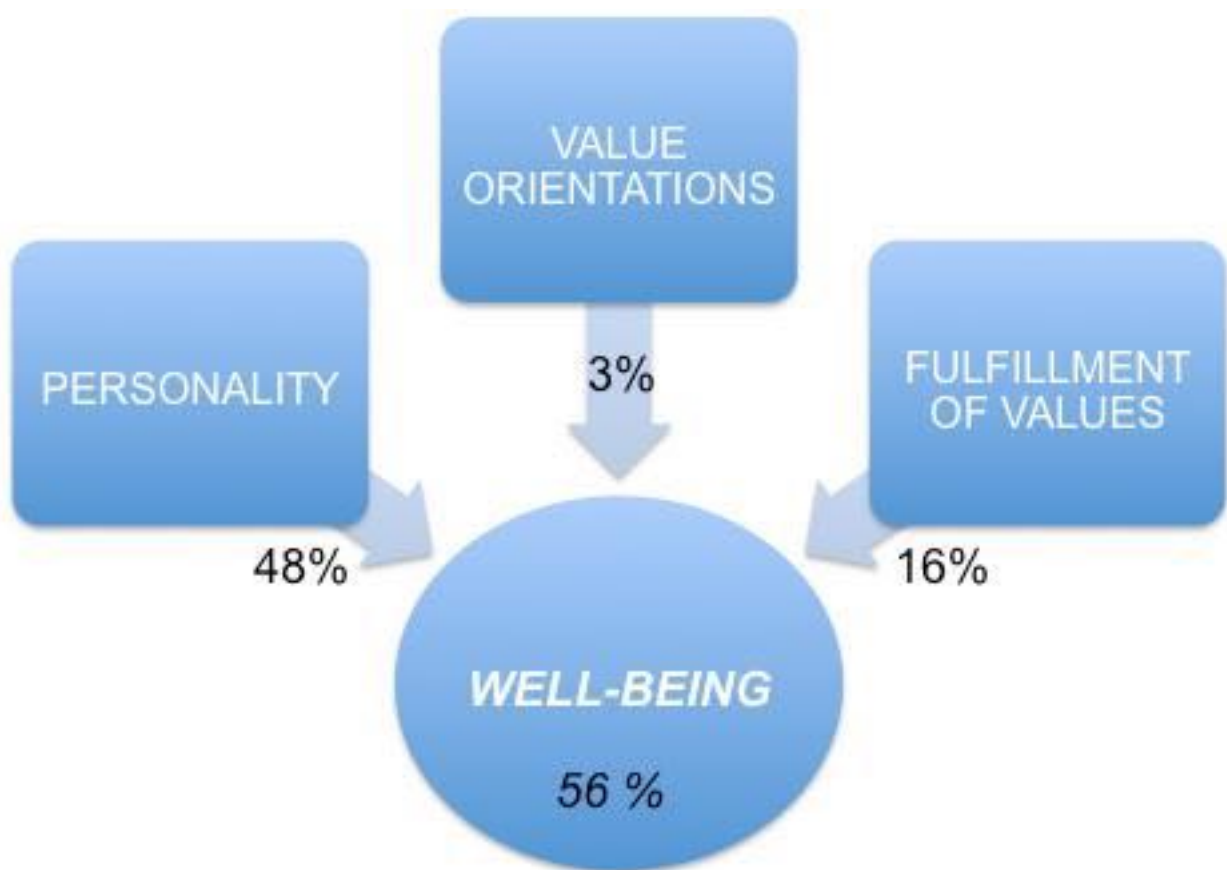


Figure 6.1:

Personality and values as predictors of the well-being. The graph is showing the relative contributions of three predictors on the well-being: personality, value orientations and fulfilment of values. More details see in the text.

The final results of the study can be summarised in the model showed by the graph in Figure 6.1. The graph is showing the respective percentages of the predictors (personality, value orientations and value fulfilment) in relation to the well-being. As we can see, the common influence of these predictors upon the well-being is very strong: about 56 percent of the entire variance of the well-being can be explained by all three predictors. Apart from the external stressors, personality and values obviously represent major predictors of the well-being and happiness. Note that the percent of the explained well-being variance is not a simple sum of the single shares of predictors. It is lower due to the correlations between predictors, especially between the value orientations and value fulfilment. The message of the results modeled by the graph is very clear: apart from the influence of personality, which is tremendous predictor of well-being (accounting for the 48 percent of the variance of well-being)), the values appeared to be very strong predictors of well-being and happiness too.

Personal value orientations accounted only for the 3 percent of the well-being variance, while the fulfilment of values in actual behaviour explained much more of the well-being variance (16 percent). Indeed, as mentioned also previously in the chapter dealing with the values, the fulfilment of the values has more predictive power for the well-being than mere ratings of the value importance (value orientations).

The results of our study undoubtedly confirmed the hypothesis that the realisation of the values in the behaviour significantly and substantially contributes to the well-being, happiness and satisfaction in life. To live in concordance with the values, ethical standards and moral norms means to live more happy and satisfying life.

Thus, our conclusion is that the ethical behaviour is not only desirable and morally superior, it also brings more happiness. The behaviour, which is congruent with the values and ethical standards, thus contributes to the well-being. From the viewpoint of our well-being it pays a person to behave ethically.