

Original Papers

Polish Psychological Bulletin
2014, vol 45(2), 134-141
DOI - 10.2478/ppb-2014-0018

Anna Maria Zawadzka*
Anna Szabowska-Walaszczyk **

Does self-improvement explain well-being in life and at workplace? Analysis based on selected measures of well-being

Abstract: Two studies were performed to test the relationship between readiness for self-improvement (consisting of two components: readiness to improve oneself and readiness to take care of one's health) and selected measures of well-being. The first study investigated whether readiness for self-improvement is related to the selected measures of overall subjective well-being (or life satisfaction). The second one investigated in what way readiness for self-improvement is related to subjective well-being at workplace (or work engagement). The results obtained in both cases showed that readiness for self-improvement is indeed related to and does account for well-being. In the first study, readiness for self-improvement (i.e. readiness to improve oneself) accounted for overall life satisfaction within important human life domains and satisfaction with the present and future life. In the second study, work engagement, was significantly linked to readiness to improve oneself but was not with readiness to take care of one's health.

Key words: self-improvement, well-being, life satisfaction, work engagement

Introduction

For centuries, philosophers and researchers alike have been interested in the question of how to increase well-being, both of the individual and the society. The idea that change and development are part of nature, and that, in order to achieve well-being, all people desire to improve themselves, their skills and their relationships was introduced by Aristotle back in ancient times (cf. Tatarkiewicz, 1983). At present times, not only is the role of individual potential and abilities in the process of pursuing happiness highlighted within the paradigm of positive psychology, but also theories rooting from humanistic psychology assume that well-being results from self-actualization and personal development. What's more, observations made by sociologists indicate that, since our environment is subject to constant change and the reality (or even culture) can be characterized as liquid and temporary (Bauman, 2006; Giddens, 2006), the new way of life demands high levels of adaptability and change. Hence, it can be assumed that self-improvement contributes to well-being in a substantial way.

As far as studying well-being is concerned, there are different approaches: well-being can be analysed by looking into inner qualities (personal qualities) or outer

qualities (living conditions and environment) or else by focusing on life chances and life results (Veenhoven, 2000). In this paper, we adopt the approach in which well-being is seen as life results (subjective well-being), or the way in which individuals evaluate their lives (Veenhoven, 2000). Therefore, the aim of this article is to examine to what extent readiness for self-improvement, understood as an intention to really improve one's traits, abilities, skills, health state (Taylor, Neter, Wayment 1995, Zawadzka, Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011), can serve as a predictor of the selected measures of well-being in life and at workplace.

So far, the studies carried out to analyse the link between self-improvement and different aspects of well-being in different social contexts have been scarce. The available findings show that self-improvement is positively related to recovery and regaining health (Taylor et al., 1995; Taylor and Lobel, 1989) and, also, that it decreases anxiety levels regarding one's appearance in a situation of social comparisons (Halliwel and Dittmar, 2009). Other conclusions are that people who declare to have made self-improvement efforts evaluate their lives better in comparison with those who do not (Ryff, 1991), and that satisfaction with elderly life is higher when people have pursued basic psychological needs (personal development). Researchers have also discovered a positive relation

* Institute of Psychology, University of Gdańsk, ul. Bażyńskiego 4, 80-592 Gdańsk, Poland, anna.maria.zawadzka@ug.edu.pl

** Institute of Psychology, University of Gdańsk, ul. Bażyńskiego 4, 80-592 Gdańsk, Poland, anna.szabowska@ug.edu.pl

between readiness for self-improvement and self-esteem, preference for achievement values and diminished levels of burnout (Zawadzka, Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011).

In this article we present two correlation studies that were conducted in order to verify the research questions: Is readiness for self-improvement related to the selected measures of overall subjective well-being? In what way is readiness for self-improvement related to subjective well-being at workplace? The assumption of study 1 was that readiness for self-improvement will explain overall subjective well-being (or overall life satisfaction) and satisfaction with the present and future life. The second study was to confirm whether readiness for self-improvement would explain subjective well-being at workplace (or work engagement).

Theoretical background

The relationships among self-improvement and self-actualization and happiness.

The idea of self-improvement is not a new one. Ancient philosophers viewed the idea of self-improvement as a way to achieve happiness. Aristotle claimed that happiness can be achieved by being successful in the domain of obligations. Also humanistic psychology has analysed self-improvement; in particular, striving for self-actualization as the basis of well-being. It was argued that self-actualization is part of developing maturity, which, in turn, results in happiness (Rogers, 1951/1991, Maslow 1970/2009). Currently, the link between self-improvement and happiness is being investigated in both self-determination theory and in positive psychology. Self-determination theory assumes that humans have a natural need to pursue self-actualization (i.e. gain knowledge, seek challenges, explore the environment). If the pursuit reflects natural inclinations for growth, internal harmony and happiness are achieved (cf. Deci and Ryan, 2000; Kasser, 2002). Similarly, theorists rooted in positive psychology suggest that well-being is a result of living according to the virtues that reflect the strength of one's character (Seligman, 2002).

What is more, self-improvement is a foundation of self-regulatory processes in the structure of the self. When people try to fulfil their standards (e.g. ideal self – „who I want to be”, ought self - “who I should be”, desired possible self – “what I want to be like” and undesired possible self – “what I don't want to be like”), they experience positive emotions (e.g. joy and happiness) and avoid negative emotions (e.g. sadness and anxiety) (cf. Cavier and Scheier 1998; Higgins, 1996, Markus and Nurius, 1986). Then, the level of experienced positive versus negative emotions can be considered a measure of well-being.

Self-improvement and well-being – review of results

The importance of self-improvement has been confirmed in numerous studies. The results indicate that self-improvement motive occurs frequently while experiencing

failure (e.g. feeling of guilt) and, then, enhances problem solving orientation and, as a result, increases well-being in the long run (Tennen, Affleck and Greshman, 1986). Moreover, a positive correlation was found between eagerness to perceive failure as an opportunity to improve oneself and heighten aspirations regarding health. In other words, if people use failure for self-improvement more often, they value health higher and put more effort into preserving it (Zawadzka and Zaleska, 2013). Similarly, research on patients with chronic diseases showed that endeavours to improve oneself (i.e. changing one's habits) lead to improving one's health and quality of life (Taylor et al., 1995, Taylor, Lobel 1989).

Another study, which tested what types of activities are linked with well-being, proved that activities related to personal development (incl. self-improvement) are connected with greater satisfaction with life (Huta and Ryan 2010, Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser and Deci, 1996). Furthermore, an inquiry into the relationship between readiness for self-improvement and indirect measures of well-being proved that readiness for self-improvement correlates positively with self-esteem and achievement values (Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011) and extraversion, and it correlates negatively with neuroticism (Zawadzka, 2014). Other findings display that being focused on personal growth (incl. self-improvement), affiliation and community feeling increases well-being, as opposed to pursuing financial success, fame and image (Kasser, 2002). What's more, it was discovered that self-improvement decreases negative emotions (i.e. anxiety). In an experiment, which analysed reactions of women exposed to attractive and slim female models in a commercial, women who focused on self-improvement didn't experience high levels of anxiety regarding their attractiveness being threatened, as opposed to those who focused on themselves. To put it simply, thinking about self-improvement decreases negative effects of women's comparisons with attractive and slim models (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2009).

Other studies also show that middle-aged adults see the improvement of their well-being as a result of intrapersonal changes, i.e. differences between the past and present regarding self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, satisfying interpersonal relations, environmental mastery and life goals (Ryff, 1991). In the same way, research into determinants of good ways of getting old concluded that descriptions of satisfaction with life included fulfilment of basic psychological needs – personal development, autonomy and affiliation (Fisher, 1995). It was also found out that in people aged between 58-65 there is a positive correlation between readiness for self-improvement (i.e. readiness to improve one's character and take care of one's health) and satisfaction with life (Mroczkowska, 2013).

In the context of organizational behaviours, it was established that readiness for self-improvement was positively related to satisfaction with life and to having managerial position and it was negatively related to burnout (Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011). In other studies, it was found out that the ability to take

active part in improving work environment and increasing personal resources at workplace increases well-being: work engagement (Bakker, Tims & Derks, 2012), job satisfaction, achieving internal goals, feeling of success, meaning and competence, personal improvement (Berg, Dutton and Wrzesniewski, 2008), and decreases the risk of burnout (Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2013). Such activities are defined as job crafting, i.e. employees themselves initiate changes that adjust jobs to personal preferences, motives and passions introducing changes into tasks, ways of thinking and interpersonal relations (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Not only do employees influence the work environment, but they also foster their personal development and growth in order to improve their personal resources (Bakker, Tims and Derks, 2012), which include undertaking self-improvement.

Study 1

The first study was designed to verify the question of whether readiness for self-improvement, understood as an intention to really improve one's traits, abilities, skills, health state (Taylor, Neter, Wayment 1995, Zawadzka, Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011), can account for the level of the selected measures of well-being and, if yes, in what way. The dominant approach to individual well-being, i.e. focusing on what people think about the life they are living (subjective well-being), was adopted in the present study (Czapiński, 1992, Diener, 2000, Veenhoven, 2000). Here, the measure of well-being refers to evaluation of one's life, both affective and cognitive, and the important components of subjective well-being are the level of positive affect and negative affect and life satisfaction (global judgment of one's life and judgment of satisfaction within important life domains). In the preceding research, the subjective well-being was measured with SWLS (Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011, Mroczkowska 2013). In the present study, a cognitive measure and an affective measure of subjective well-being were applied. The former refers to calculation of overall life satisfaction on the basis of appraisals of satisfaction/content within important life domains (Andrews and Withey, 1976, Veethoven, 2009). The latter refers to appraisal of one's whole life in different periods of time, in the present and in the future. Therefore, taking account of the findings indicating that self-improvement is positively related to lower levels of burnout (Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011), and to greater satisfaction with life among middle-aged adults (Ryff, 1991) and the elderly (Fisher, 1995, Mroczkowska, 2013) and to decreased anxiety (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2009), we assumed, in this survey, that readiness for self-improvement may be a good predictor of overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with present life and with life in the future.

Method

Group

254 participants, 99 men and 155 women, took part in this study. The average age was $M=24.66$, ($SD=6.35$).

The participants, social science students, were students at universities in the central part of Poland; 90 % of them have full-time or part-time jobs.

Materials and procedure

To measure readiness for self-improvement, Readiness for Self-Improvement Questionnaire - SRSI was used (Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011). It consists of 14 items including two sub scales: readiness to improve oneself (11 items, e.g. "When I feel there is something wrong with me I try to change this", "I strive for real improvement of my skills and abilities", "My weaknesses motivate me to act") and readiness to take care of one's health (3 items, e.g. "Healthy diet is important for me", "I actively strive for real improvement of my well-being"). Respondents give answers using a scale ranging from "1 – this doesn't describe me at all" to "5 – this definitely describes me".

Well-being was measured with two scales: Life Satisfaction Scale (Czapiński and Panek, 2009), and Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale, called Cantril Ladder (Cantril, 1965).

Life Satisfaction Scale evaluates feeling of satisfaction within important domains of human life. The important life domains chosen for evaluation include: relations with close family members, financial situation of your family, relations with friends, health, accomplishments in life, situation in the country, housing conditions, place of residence, prospects for the future, education, ways of spending leisure time, work, studies, sex life, marriage/relationship with partner, safety in the place of residence. Respondents answer each question on a 6-point scale, ranging from "1 - very unsatisfied" to "6" - very satisfied". The overall life satisfaction refers to the sum of all the answers to the scale.

Cantril Ladder (Cantril, 1965) allows respondents to evaluate their lives as a whole and at different points in time (present and future). The respondents are presented with a picture of a ladder. They have to answer the following questions: "On which step of the ladder, would you say, you personally feel you stand at this time?" (present ladder) "On which step of ladder, do you think, you will stand about five years from now?" (future ladder). The respondents answer the questions on an 11-point scale, from "0 - Worst possible life" to "10 - Best possible life".

Descriptive statistics and reliability of the examined variables are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability of tested variables—study 1

Variables	M	SD	α
Overall Satisfaction with life	3.82 (max 6)	.62	.73
Satisfaction with the present life (present ladder)	6.5(max 10)	1.58	-
Satisfaction with future life (future ladder)	8.39 (max 10)	1.58	-
Readiness for self-improvement	4.12 (max 6)	.79	.88
Readiness to take care of one's health	3.61 (max 6)	1.05	.76

Procedure

Respondents were asked to fill in Readiness for Self-improvement Questionnaire (SRSI) and two measures of well-being: Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale and Life satisfaction Scale. The survey was conducted in groups of 10 to 30 persons.

Results

First, r-Pearson correlations between two types of readiness for self-improvement and satisfaction with life within important life domains were calculated. The results showed that readiness to improve oneself is strongly positively related to satisfaction with accomplishments in life ($r=.33, p<.001$), prospects for the future ($r=.39, p<.001$), studies ($r=.31, p<.001$) and work ($r=.28, p<.001$). Positive, but weaker, correlations also occur between readiness to improve oneself and satisfaction with financial situation of the family ($r=.14, p<.05$), health ($r=.13, p<.05$), situation in the country ($r=.20, p<.01$), education ($r=.18, p<.01$), ways of spending leisure time ($r=.19, p<.01$), and safety in the place of residence ($r=.13, p<.05$). Additionally, readiness to take care of one's health is positively linked to situation in the country ($r=.17, p<.01$), prospects for the future ($r=.16, p<.01$), ways of spending leisure time ($r=.18, p<.01$), work ($r=.15, p<.05$), and studies ($r=.13, p<.05$); these correlations being weak ones.

Next, linear regression analysis (enter method) was applied. The independent variables were two types of readiness for self-improvement, the dependent variable was the overall subjective well-being score (i.e. the sum of important life domain satisfaction scores). The tested model was significant $R=.37, R^2=.13, F(2,251)=19.47, p<.001$. The analysis of detailed regression coefficients showed that readiness to improve oneself correlates positively with overall satisfaction with life ($\beta=.38, t=5.69, p<.001$). Thus, this dimension of readiness for self-improvement is a good predictor of the participants' subjective well-being (see table 2).

Table 2. Summary of regression analysis – readiness for self-improvement as predictor of the selected life well-being measures

Variable	readiness to improve oneself	
	β	t
Overall satisfaction	.38	5.69***
	$R=.37, R^2=.13, F=19.47^{***} (df=2,251)$	
Satisfaction with the present life	.32	4.64***
	$R=.29, R^2=.08, F=11.35^{***} (df=2,251)$	
Satisfaction with future life	.34	5.03***
	$R=.33, R^2=.11, F=14.98^{***} (df=2,251)$	

Note: Levels of significance * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$

Finally, we tested how the two dimensions of readiness for self-improvement account for satisfaction with the present and with the future life. To answer this question, independent linear regression analyses were conducted (enter method). It was confirmed that readiness to improve oneself significantly explains satisfaction with the present life: $R=.29, R^2=.08, F(2, 251)=11.35, p=.001, \beta=.32, t=4.64, p<.001$ and satisfaction with the future life ($R=.33, R^2=.11, F(2, 251)=15.01, p=.001, \beta=.34, t=5.03, p<.001$) (see table 2). Therefore, our assumptions were confirmed since the results showed that one of the dimensions of readiness for self-improvement, i.e. readiness to improve oneself, is a good predictor of the participants' subjective well-being (evaluation of the present and future life).

However, readiness to take care of one's health was not significantly linked with subjective well-being.

Study 2

The aim of the second study was to verify the question of whether self-improvement can also foster well-being in a workplace context. Similarly to study 1, the analysis concentrated on one of the four qualities of life proposed by Veenhoven (2000), i.e. inner results of life understood as subjective appreciation of life in the work-related area. Current advances in emerging fields - positive organizational behaviour, positive organizational scholarship and positive occupational health psychology indicate the following ways of measuring workplace well-being: job satisfaction, positive emotions, workplace happiness, flow, work engagement (Luthans, 2002; Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008; Bakker and Oerlmans, 2010).

In this particular study the authors use, as indicators of well-being, work engagement, defined as a positive, work-related and fulfilling state of mind characterized by absorption, dedication and vigor (cf. Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). Work engagement can be linked with concepts of well-being happiness. For example, Seligman (2011) defines happiness through three dimensions: positive emotions, meaning and engagement, understood as experiencing flow. Similarly, work engagement is characterized by absorption and being engrossed in tasks. However findings show it is a more pervasive state than typical flow experience (Bakker, 2011). Also similarly as positive emotions in broaden and built theory developed by Frederickson (2001), work engagement plays a central role in spirals of positive gains regarding personal resources and proactivity (Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou & Bakker, 2010). Work engagement was also proved to be positively related to, among others, better perceived health and decreased sickness absence, higher levels of happiness (cf. Schaufeli, Taris and Bakker, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2008, Schaufeli, Bakker and Van Rhenen, 2009), enhanced quality of life in various ways (cf. Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2010; Szabowska-Walaszczyk, Zawadzka & Brzozowski, 2013).

Since work engagement is linked with proactive behaviour and initiative (Hakanen et al., 2008), and active learning (Sonnentag, 2003), activities that are of self-improving character, it was assumed that self-improvement

will account for work engagement. The relationship between self-improvement and well-being at workplace was also confirmed by studies regarding job crafting, or, in other words, undertaking actions that improve one's functioning at workplace (cf. Berg, Dutton and Wrzesniewski, 2008; Bakker, Tims and Derks, 2012; Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2013).

In short, based on previous research it was assumed that readiness for self-improvement is positively related to and that it will be a good predictor of work engagement and its three constituents, absorption, dedication and vigor (Bakker and Oerlmans, 2010; Bakker et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2013).

Method

Group

102 participants, 36 men and 66 women, from the area of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot took part in this study. The average age was $M=35.40$ ($SD=8.50$). All of them professionally active, most of them had a degree (85%) and full-time jobs (98%). As for the career structure, 59% were specialists, 21% were line workers, 12,7% had managerial positions and 7,2% were freelance workers.

Materials and procedure

To measure readiness for self-improvement, SRSI questionnaire was used, whose detailed description is provided in study 1 (cf. Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk 2011). The presented analysis focuses only on general readiness for self-improvement (excluding self-improvement of one's health), as the study was conducted in a workplace context.

Work engagement was measured with UWES-PL-9, a shortened version of UWES questionnaire consisting of 9 (instead of 17) items (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003; Szabowska-Walaszczyk et al., 2011, Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2013). There are 3 subscales: absorption, dedication and vigour, each of which has 3 items. Respondents mark their answers on a 6-point scale ranging from "0 – Never" to "6 – Always".

Both measures have reached satisfactory levels of Cronbach α . Descriptive statistics and reliability of the tools are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and reliability of tested variables—study 2

Variables	M	SD	α
Work engagement (UWES-PL)	3.71	1.18	.91
Absorption (UWES-PL)	3.76	1.28	.73
Dedication (UWES-PL)	3.78	1.31	.85
Vigour (UWES-PL)	3.60	1.25	.83
Readiness for self-improvement	3.91	.59	.89

Procedure.

Participants were given a set of questionnaires regarding well-being at workplace and values, including the tools described above. The survey was administered individually or in small groups.

Results

First, separate linear regression analyses were used to verify the assumptions. The models included readiness to improve oneself as an independent variable and a single measure of well-being at workplace, i.e. work engagement absorption, dedication and vigor, i.e. work engagement, as a dependent variable. The detailed results are presented in table 4.

The first model, which included work engagement as a dependent variable, was significant ($R=.45$; $R^2=.20$; $F(1,108)=27$; $p<.001$) and self-improvement explained the level of work-engagement ($\beta=.45$, $t=5.28$, $p<.001$).

Next, further linear regression analyses were conducted with the constituents of engagement (absorption, dedication and vigor) as dependent variables. The model including absorption was significant ($R=.37$; $R^2=.22$; $F(1,108)=30.88$; $p<.001$) and the independent variable explained the dependent variable ($\beta=.47$, $t=5.58$, $p<.001$). The second model was also significant ($R=.35$; $R^2=.12$; $F(1,108)=14.98$; $p<.001$) and the level of dedication to work was strongly positively related to readiness for self-improvement ($\beta=.35$, $t=3.87$, $p<.001$). Finally, the model including vigor as a dependent variable was significant ($R=.44$; $R^2=.19$; $F(1,108)=25.33$; $p<.001$) and there was a positive link between self-improvement and vigor ($\beta=.43$, $t=5.03$, $p<.001$).

Table 2. Summary of regression analysis – readiness for self-improvement as predictor of the selected well-being at workplace measures

Variable	Readiness for self-improvement	
	β	t
Work engagement	.45	5.28***
	$R=.45$ $R^2=.20$ $F=27$ *** ($df=1,108$)	
Absorption	.47	5.58***
	$R=.47$ $R^2=.22$ $F=30.88$ *** ($df=1,108$)	
Dedication	.35	3.87***
	$R=.35$ $R^2=.12$ $F=14.98$ *** ($df=1,108$)	
Vigour	.43	5.03***
	$R=.44$ $R^2=.19$ $F=25.33$ *** ($df=1,108$)	

Note: Levels of significance * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$

Discussion and summary

In the studies presented above, we have attempted to establish to what extent readiness for self-improvement is a good predictor of subjective well-being in life and at workplace.

Study 1 shows that one of the analysed dimensions of self-improvement, i.e. readiness for self-improvement, allows to predict overall life satisfaction and both the present and future life satisfaction, which confirms the conclusions of preceding studies indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between readiness for self-improvement and subjective well-being (cf. Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011; Mroczkowska, 2013). There, the relationship between self-improvement and subjective well-being was indicated by means of different measures of well-being (SWLS), and in different samples (working women and elderly people) (cf. Zawadzka and Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2011; Mroczkowska, 2013). The presented results are also in line with the results of other researchers showing that activities motivated by eudaimonic aims (seeking to use and develop the best in oneself) are correlated with life satisfaction measured with SWLS (Huta and Ryan, 2010). The results of the present study show that readiness for self-improvement is strongly linked to satisfaction within four important life domains, such as: accomplishments in life, prospects for the future, work and studies. It means that, if people are more ready to improve themselves, they are more satisfied with their accomplishments, their future, their work and their studies. This indicates that these domains could also be the most affective life domains in the analysed sample, i.e. university students. A possible interpretation of the results of study 1 may be that people see their present life and life in the future more favourably if they have readiness for self-improvement. Readiness for self-improvement can be considered an ability to see one's life as better and not worse. So, readiness for self-improvement can be described as a personal ability, a life chance to lead a good life (Veenhoven, 2000). This has been confirmed by other findings, namely that readiness for self-improvement is linked significantly with certain life chances i.e. extraversion, and neuroticism (Zawadzka, 2014).

The other component of readiness for self-improvement, i.e. readiness to take care of one's health, has turned out not to be a good predictor of the tested measures of subjective well-being. The results of the present study also show that although readiness to improve one's health is not important in predicting overall satisfaction with life, the intention to improve one's traits, abilities and skills is important. This means that readiness to change oneself is more important in predicting how a person evaluates the life he/she is living than readiness to improve one's health, an attitude concerning a life domain. Therefore, the interpretation may be that readiness to improve one's health, itself, may not predict satisfaction with life, but undertaking an activity aimed at improving one's health may increase well-being. The studies on chronically ill patients showed a positive association between self-improvement, i.e. activities aimed at changing bad habits and health enhancement, and the increase in quality of life among patients (cf. Taylor et al., 1995).

Study 2 demonstrates that there is a strong positive relationship between readiness for self-improvement and well-being at workplace. It was confirmed that the subjective well-being measure correlates positively and in

a significant manner with readiness to improve oneself. The more people are ready to improve themselves, the higher the subjective work-related well-being (i.e. work engagement) is, which is true for all three aspects of work engagement, absorption, dedication and vigor. Moreover, this is in-line with the findings of Bakker et al. (2012), for example, who showed that proactive personality and increasing structural job resources through professional development have a positive effect on the level of work engagement.

It should, however, be noted that, of the three constituents of work engagement, the weakest link with self-improvement was observed for dedication. The explanation may lay in the definition (and operationalization) of the three factors: a) dedication means being strongly involved in one's work, having high levels of inspiration and enthusiasm; b) vigor is understood as having high levels of energy, mental resilience and persistence while working; c) absorption is defined as being fully concentrated and engrossed in one's work (see Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). Hence, improving professional skills 1) could lead to increased mastery and competence, and greater absorption in tasks (flow-like experiences), also 2) job demands, such as workload, could be diminished resulting in lessened depletion of personal resources and preserving more energy and vigor. At the same time, professional development may have the least influence on enthusiasm and on job involvement, but rather be their result. This, however, needs further examination.

Most important, a strong positive link between readiness for self-improvement and work engagement creates a pathway for workplace interventions. For example, Cifre, Salanova and Rodriguez-Sanchez (2011) have proved that workplace interventions aimed at job and personal resources that improve professional self-efficacy and perceived competence can positively influence well-being at workplace, work engagement included. Hence, special training or coaching programmes should be introduced, showing participants how self-improvement and continuous development can foster their well-being at workplace. Such interventions should be addressed not only to people with diminished well-being at workplace (i.e. burned-out) but also to workforce in general in order to prevent ill-being in the future.

Future research should address questions about other measures of subjective well-being. For example, how is readiness for self-improvement related to the frequency of positive and negative affects or do people who have higher intention to improve themselves have more positive emotions than people who have lower intention for self-improvement? In order to achieve a better understanding of the implications of the results presented in this paper for individual well-being, further research should be carried out into the relationships between readiness for self-improvement and the selected indicators of well-being concerning inner qualities within the area of life chances (Veenhoven, 2000), e.g. optimism, self-efficacy or self-control. The research may answer an important question of whether readiness for self-improvement is linked with self-control abilities, self-efficacy or optimism, which lead to a good life.

In conclusion, it seems that subjective well-being can be predicted based on the level of readiness for self-improvement. The results of the two presented studies correspond to findings obtained by other researchers regarding factors determining overall well-being in life and well-being in a particular social context, i.e. at workplace, which indicate that the intention to improve oneself can positively influence the level of happiness.

To put it differently, since readiness for self-improvement may serve as a predictor of overall well-being, it may well be a way to reach happiness.

Reference

- Andrews, F. M., & Withney, S. (1976). *Social indicators of well-being. American Perceptions of life quality*. New York: Plenum Press
- Bakker, A. (2011). An Evidence-Based Model of Work Engagement. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20 (4), 265–269.
- Bakker, A. & Schaufeli W. (2008). Positive organizational behavior: Engaged employees in flourishing organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29, 147–154.
- Bakker, A., Tims, M., & Derks, D. (2012). Proactive personality and job performance: The role of job crafting and work engagement, *Human Relations*, 65 (10), 1359–1378.
- Bakker, A., Oelrmans, W. (2010). Subjective well-being in organizations, In: K. Cameron, & G. Spreitzer (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*. Oxford University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2006). *Phylna nowoczesność. [Liquid modernity]*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Berg, J., Dutton, J., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2008). *What is Job Crafting and Why Does It Matter? Theory-to-practice briefing*. From the Center for Positive Organisational Scholarship. Michigan Ross School of Business, Regents of the University of Michigan.
- Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J., & Quinn, R. (2003). *Positive organizational scholarship*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Carver, S.C., & Scheier, M.F. (1998). *On the Self-regulation of behaviour*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Czapiński, J. (1992). *Psychologia szczęścia. Przegląd badań i zarys teorii cebulowej. [Psychology of happiness. A review of studies and outline of onion theory]* Warszawa: Akademos.
- Czapiński, J., & Panek, T. (2009). *Diagnoza społeczna 2009. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków. [Social diagnosis 2009. A conditions and quality of life of the Poles]*. Warszawa: Rada Monitoringu Społecznego.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behaviour. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227–268.
- Fisher, B. J. (1995). Successful aging, life satisfaction, and generativity in later life. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 41 (3), 239–250.
- Frederickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56 (3), 218–226.
- Giddens, A. (2006). *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. “Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późniejszej nowoczesności. [Modernity and Self-identity. Self and society in the late modern age]*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN
- Hakanen, J., Perhoniemi, L., & Toppinen-Tanner, S. (2008). Positive gain spirals at work: From job resources to work engagement, personal initiative and work-unit innovativeness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 73, 78–91.
- Halliwel, E., & Dittmar, H. (2009). The role of self-improvement and self-evaluation motives in social comparisons with idealized female bodies in the media. *Body Image*, 2 (3), 249–261.
- Higgins, E.T. (1996). The “self digest”. Self-knowledge serving self-regulatory functions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 1062–1083.
- Huta, V., & Ryan, M.R. (2010). Pursuing pleasure or virtue: the differential and overlapping well-being benefits of hedonic and eudaimonic motives. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 11, 735–762.
- Kasser, T. (2002). *The High Price of Materialism*. New York: MIT Press: MA.
- Luthans, F. (2002). The need for and meaning of positive organizational behaviour. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 695–706.
- Markus, H., Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41, 954–969.
- Maslow, A. (1970/ 2009). *Motywacja i osobowość. [Motivation and personality]*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Mroczkowska, M. (2013). *Podejmowanie aktywności, style spędzania wolnego czasu, preferowane wartości i gotowość do samonaprawy w świetle jakości życia u osób starszych. [Undertaken activities, leisure time, preferred values and readiness for self-improvement in the elderly people quality of life perspective]* Praca magisterska napisana pod kierunkiem prof. UG dr hab. Anny Marii Zawadzkiej. Instytut Psychologii, Uniwersytet Gdański
- Ryan, R.M., Sheldon, K.M., Kasser, T., Deci, E.L. (1996). All goals are not created equal: An organismic perspective on the nature of goals and their regulation. In: P. M. Gollwitzer, J. & A. Bargh (Eds.), *The psychology of action: Linking cognition and motivation to behaviour*, (pp. 7–26). New York: Guilford Press.
- Ryff, C. D. (1991). Possible selves in adulthood and aging. A tale of shifting horizons. *Psychology and Aging*, 6, 286–295.
- Rogers, C. R. (1951/1991). *Terapia nastawiona na klienta: grupy spotkaniowe. [Client-Centered Therapy]*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersy GOSPODARKI.
- Salanova, M., Schaufeli, W. B., Xanthopoulou, D., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). The gain spiral of resources and work engagement: Sustaining a positive worklife. In A. B. Bakker & M. P. Leiter (Eds.), *Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research* (pp. 118–131). New York: Psychology Press.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2003). *Work Engagement Utrecht Scale. Preliminary Manual*. Utrecht.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Van Rhenen, W. (2009). How changes in job demands and resources predict burnout, work engagement, and sickness absenteeism. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 30, 893–917.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Taris, T. W., & Bakker, A. B. (2006). Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hide: On the differences between work engagement and workaholism. In: R. Burke (Eds.), *Research companion to working time and work addiction*, (pp. 193–217). Northampton: Edward Elgar.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Taris, T. W., & Van Rhenen, W. (2008). Workaholism, burnout and engagement: Three of a kind or three different kinds of employee well-being. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 57, 173–203.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York: Simon and Schuster,
- Sonnentag, S. (2003). Recovery, work engagement, and proactive behaviour: a new look at the interface between non-work and work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 518–28.
- Szabowska-Walaszczyk A., (2013) *Komplementarny i suplementarny charakter dopasowania pracownika do organizacji jako wyznacznik zaangażowania w pracę*. Niepublikowana rozprawa doktorska, Uniwersytet Gdański.
- Szabowska-Walaszczyk, A. (2010). Zaangażowanie w pracy i organizacji – przegląd problematyki i narzędzi pomiaru, [Engagement at work and in organization - review of the issue and tools]. In: A. M. Zawadzka (Eds.), *Psychologia zarządzania w organizacji*, (pp.141-168) . Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Szabowska-Walaszczyk, A., Zawadzka, A. M., Wojtaś, M. (2011). Zaangażowanie w pracę i jego korelaty: adaptacja skali UWES autorstwa Schaufeliego i Bakker’a. [Work engagement and its correlates: an adaptation of Schaufeli’s and Bakker’s work engagement measure - UWLS]. *Psychologia Jakości Życia*, 10 (1), 57–74.
- Szabowska-Walaszczyk, A., Zawadzka, A. M., Brzozowski, A. (2013). Employee engagement: how business goals can be achieved through employee well-being, In: Málóvics É. & Kincsesné Vajda B. (Eds.): *Proceedings of the “Scientific Management” and Management Science Today International Scientific Conference*, (pp. 418–429). University of Szeged Faculty of Economics and Business Administration,
- Tatarkiewicz, W. (1983). *Historia filozofii. [History of Philosophy]*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe
- Taylor, S. E., & Lobel, M. (1989). Social comparison activity under threat: Downward evaluations and upward contact. *Psychological Review*, 96, 569–575.

- Taylor, S. E., Neter, E., & Wayment, H.A. (1995). Self-evaluation processes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 1278-1287.
- Tims, M., Bakker, A. & Derks D, (2013). The impact of job crafting on job demands, job resources, and well-Being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 18 (2), 230–240.
- Tenner, M., Affleck, G., & Greshman, K. (1986). Self-blame among parents of infants prenatal complications: the role of self-protective motives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 690-696.
- Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review*, 26, 179–201.
- Veenhoven, R. (2000). The four qualities of life. Ordering concepts and measures of the good life. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 1, 1-39.
- Veenhoven, R. (2009). How do we assess how happy we are? Tenets, implications and tenability of three theories. In A. K. Dutt, & B. Radcliff (Eds.), *Happiness, Economics and Politics: Towards a multi-disciplinary approach*, (pp. 45-69). Cheltenham UK: Edward Elger Publishers
- Zawadzka, A.M., Szabowska-Walaszczyk, A. (2011). Z czym się wiąże motyw samonaprawy? Korelaty gotowości do samonaprawy, [What is self-improvement motive about? Selected determinants of readiness for self-improvement analysis]. *Psychologia Jakości Życia*, 10 (1), 7-24.
- Zawadzka, A.M., Zaleska, J. (2013). Czy pokora może dawać szczęście w życiu? Związki pokory z aspiracjami życiowymi i zadowoleniem z życia. [Can Humility Bring Happiness in Life? The Relationship Between Life Aspirations, Subjective Well-Being, and Humility]. *Roczniki Psychologiczne*, 16 (3), 415-431.
- Zawadzka, A.M. (2014). Readiness for self-improvement questionnaire - tool reliability and accuracy analysis. *Acta Neuropsychologica*, 12, 1, 73-84