Shyness and emotional expressiveness as predictors of well-being

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine whether shyness and emotional expressiveness can be predictive factors of well-being. Participants in this study are people (N = 50) aged between 21 and 64 (M=32.5, SD=4.61) who completed Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale, the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire and the Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales. The study tested hypotheses which stipulate that well-being is higher when the level of shyness is lower and that there is a correlation between well-being and emotional expressiveness.

The results of the study have shown that there is a negative correlation between shyness and well-being. It also highlighted the fact that there is no significant difference between men and women in terms of shyness, emotional expressiveness and well-being.

Keywords: *Shyness, emotional expressiveness, well-being, gratifying life, positive relations with others*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Shyness is seen as a behavior that leads to the increase of an individual's issues. It includes fear, which manifests universally, irrespective of culture (Weiner & Craighead, 2010). Shyness leads to inhibitions and prevents the process of developing healthy interpersonal relationships and achieving professional goals (Henderson, Zimbardo & Carducci, 2014).

A shy individual tends to concentrate on himself and to be concerned about his own thoughts (Crozier, 2002). Shyness is a psychological state that creates discomfort, leading ultimately to the avoidance of social contact. Cheek, Melchior and Carpentieri (1986) define it as „the tendency to feel tense, anxious or strange during social interactions, especially with strangers. Shy behavior can be triggered by a variety of stimuli (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998). An individual may feel shy when interacting with strangers or with authoritarian figures; while initiating conversations within a group; or while performing a social activity in unstructured group situations (D'Souza, Urs, & Jayaraju, 2008). Also, shyness can be decisive when the individual has to establish a relationship with a person of the opposite sex in a one-on-one situation (Ghasemian, D'Souza, & Ebrahimi, 2012). Metaphorically speaking, shyness can be considered a setback in life - it weakens the inter-human connections (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2010) influencing the mind, the body and the self as a whole (Sinha, 2011).

Research shows that shy people are aware of them and give up their own pleasures because they feel as if they are outside social norms (Schlenker, & Weigold, 1990). In dealing with others, they find technology-mediated communication easier than face-to-face (Chan, 2011). Shy people who are aware of this aspect have an increased perception of personal identity, while those who are consciously perceived publicly as shy, have higher social compliance and identity and align themselves with social movements (Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce, & Burgess, 2006).

Shy individuals prefer to create an autonomous identity and will monitor and control how they appear to build a shy image in the eyes of others. However, those who are aware of their shyness control their own shy behavior and public attitudes to protect their autonomy. Shy individuals are aware of their lack of social skills (Creed & Funder, 1998). As a result, they avoid being involved in social relationships and many of them live alone (Jackson, Fritch, Nagasaka, & Gunderson, 2002).

Valentiner, Mounts, Durik and Gier-Lonsway (2011) also found that high levels of shyness and low levels of sociability are correlated with high levels of loneliness.

Emotional expressivity, according to John and Gross (2004) involves a behavioral change (that is, face expressions, posture etc.) that accompanies an emotion, such as smiling, crying, frowning etc. According to their perspective, an individual is emotionally expressive insofar as

he / she manifests his behavioral emotional impulses (e.g. by gestures). Gross and John propose a pattern of emotion that explains the differences between individuals in terms of emotional expressiveness. According to this model, emotion occurs when an internal or external input is processed so that an emotional program (sadness, joy etc.) is triggered. Once triggered, this emotional program activates the responses (including physiological changes, subjective feelings, or behavioral impulses) that prepare the body to respond adaptively to the challenges or opportunities of the environment. In any case, emotions do not force an individual to act in a certain way, but they only suggest it. That is why feelings are not always expressed. Emotional response tendencies may or may not be expressed through visible behaviors (Gross, 2002).

Gross and John (2004) argue that the emotional response tendencies are the ones that directly determine the emotional behavior. Individuals can modulate their responses by choosing whether and how these tendencies are expressed in behaviors (following for example, the observance of socially established behavioral rules – "do not laugh when in the church" or personal established ones "I do not want to seem weak in front of them"). A person may be emotionally less expressive either because he has poor emotional impulses or because he inhibits those impulses, regardless of their strength, time or even both.

Expression of emotions is an integral part of human adaptive functioning (Dobbs, Sloan, & Karpinski, 2007; Aho, 2010), whereas the dysfunction of emotional expression is an essential feature of many forms of psychopathology (e.g. Kring, & Moran, 2008). Expression of emotions has been linked to positive physical and psychological health in the general population (Sloan & Marx, 2004) and in specific groups such as breast cancer patients (Stanton et al., 2000) and older adults (Shaw et al., 2004).

There are two traditions: a hedonistic one, aiming at happiness as the presence of positive emotions and emotions and the absence of negative ones and a eudaimonian one - centered on a full-lived and satisfying and gratifying life (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this context, the subjective well-being, referring to optimal psychological experience and functionality, has been studied as a basic theme in the psychology of the last quarter of a century. This is largely due to work of Diener (Diener, 1984). According to the author, the well-being of the individual is considered subjective, as he generally assesses the extent to which the well-being lives and gives it a meaning in accordance with his or her own experience. The mere equivalence of mental well-being with the absence of mental pathology was substituted by the consideration of the multi-dimensional framework of psychic functionality developed by Carol Ryff (1989). Exploring the meanings of mental well-being, the author described the following six dimensions:

- Self-acceptance – positive evaluation of one's own and previous experiences;
- Environmental mastery – the ability to manage one's own life as well as its surroundings;

- Autonomy – ability to self-determine and resist social pressures, to think and act in certain ways;
- Positive relations with others – harmonious interpersonal relationships, reflecting the willingness to take into account the needs of others;
- Personal growth – opening up new experiences, reflecting the need for self-development;
- The purpose in life – awareness of the purpose and meaning of one's own life (Ryff, 1989).

Research by Ryff and Singer revealed that high levels of subjective well-being correlate with better neuroendocrine circulation, with reduced cardiovascular risk and optimal immune functionality (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

The issue of defining the subjective well-being is still unresolved (Habelrih, & Hicks, 2015; Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). Being a multidimensional construct, its definition or its elements change according to the context in which it is studied (Dodge et al., 2012). The subjective well-being is related to the way in which people subjectively assess their lives both cognitively and emotionally.

II. METHOD AND OBJECTIVES

1. Purpose and research questions

Questions of the research:

- What is the relationship between shyness and well-being?
- What is the relationship between emotional expressiveness and well-being?
- What are the well-being factors most strongly influenced by the level of shyness and emotional expressiveness?

General objective: the aim of this descriptive study is to determine whether shyness and emotional expressiveness are predictors of well-being.

This study will explore the following research questions:

- Is there a correlation between the level of shyness and the level of well-being?
- Is there a correlation between the level of emotional expressiveness and the level of well-being?
- Is there a relationship between the level of shyness and the level of emotional expressiveness?

2. Research hypotheses

(1) It is hypothesized that people with a higher level of well-being have lower levels of shyness than people with a lower level of well-being.

(2) People with a higher level of well-being have a higher level of emotional expressiveness than people with a lower level of well-being.

(3) It is hypothesized that the higher the level of shyness, the lower the level of well-being components: autonomy, environmental control, personal growth, positive relationships with others, the goal in life and self-acceptance.

(4) The more a person has a higher level of affective expressiveness, the higher the components of the well-being: autonomy, environmental control, personal growth, positive relationships with others, the goal in life and self-acceptance.

3. Procedure

3.1. Participants

The research was conducted on 50 subjects, 82% women and 18% men, ages 21 to 64, *(M=32.5, SD=4.61*) first year students of Cognitive-Behavioral Behavioral Psychotherapy Master's degree at Titu Maiorescu University, Bucharest. Pencil on paper tests were performed under normal conditions for subjects. They were not rewarded for participating in this research. The data was collected in April 2018, following application of the tools to the group of subjects. The tests were applied individually, ensuring the confidentiality of all participants in this study.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS; Cheek, 1983).

Cheek and Buss (1981) define shyness as discomfort or inhibition in the presence of others. This instrument is a 13-item unifactorial measure of shyness that is based on the original 9-item measure of shyness and sociability (Cheek & Buss, 1981). The RCBS was associated with strong internal consistency (α= .90) and excellent 45-day, test–retest reliability (r= .88).

Responses to the 13 items are measured on a 5-point scale (1 = total disagreement, 5 = total agreement). The final score is obtained by reversing the scores to 4 items and adding them to the other items. Items 3, 6, 9 and 12 score backwards (1 = 5, 2 = 4, 4 = 2, 5 = 1). The final answer may vary between 13 (very low shyness) and 65 (very high shyness). To avoid confusing shyness with sociability, the items measure the affective and behavioral aspects of shyness without referring to the desire to have or avoid social interactions.

3.2.2. Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (Gross, & John, 1997).

The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire comprises 16 items designed to measure the emotional expressiveness of an individual. The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire assesses three facets of emotional expressivity: negative expressivity, positive expressivity, and impulse

strength. Responses to the 16 items are measured on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strong disagreement, 7 = strong agreement).

3.2.3. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB, Ryff, 1989).

The Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales consists of either 84 questions (long form) or 48 questions (medium form). There is also a short form but it is statistically uncertain and should therefore not be used for evaluation. Long and medium forms consist of a series of statements that reflect the six areas of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, and purpose in life, and self-acceptance. On a scale of 1 to 6, 1 indicates strong disagreement and 6 indicate strong agreement. The answers are summed up for each of the six categories (about half of the answers are marked in reverse, which is indicated on the main test copy). For each category, a high score indicates that the respondent has a mastery of that area in his life. Instead, a low score shows that the respondent strives to feel comfortable with this particular concept.

IV. RESULTS

The results indicated that between shyness and well-being there is a significant negative correlation, which means that as the level of shyness increases, the state of well being diminishes. It is also noted that there is no significant correlation between expressiveness and well-being (Table 1). There is no significant correlation between the level of shyness and the level of affective expressivity. According to the results, there is a relationship of dependence between well-being and shyness, the dependent variable (well-being) being explained 22% by the independent variable (shyness) ($R^2 = 0.218$).

4.1. The correlation between well-being and shyness

Table 1. Pearson Correlation shyness and well-being

Correlations

		Shyness score	Expressivity total score	Well-being total score
Shyness score	Pearson Correlation	1	-.041	-.467**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.778	.001
	N	50	50	50
Expressivity total score	Pearson Correlation	-.041	1	.137
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.778		.344
	N	50	50	50
Well-being total score	Pearson Correlation	-.467**	.137	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.344	
	N	50	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. ANOVA

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5389.301	1	5389.301	13.399	.001[b]
	Residual	19306.379	48	402.216		
	Total	24695.680	49			

a. Dependent Variable: Well-being total score

b. Predictors: (Constant), Shyness score

Above we have the ANOVA table that shows that the linear regression model between shyness and well-being is statistically relevant - shyness can be a predictor of well-being (Sigma is less than 0.05 - the risk threshold).

According to the table 3, because Sigma is less than the 0.05 risk threshold and the confidence interval does not contain zero, we can say that the parameters of the regression model are statistically significant, which means that the level of well-being can be estimated from the shyness values.

Table 3.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	227.364	8.787		25.874	.000	209.696	245.032
	Scor timiditate	-1.098	.300	-.467	-3.660	.001	-1.702	-.495

a. Dependent Variable: Well-being total score

4.2. The correlation between well-being and emotional expressiveness

There is no correlation between the predictor (emotional expressiveness) and the criterion (well-being). The dependent variable (well-being) is only explained in a ratio of 1.9% by the independent variable (affective expressivity) (where $R^2 = 0.019$).

The fact that the emotional expressiveness does not explain well-being also results from the correlation table above - there is no significant correlation between the state of well-being and the expressiveness (Pearson's coefficient is 0.137 and the Sig value of 0.172, which exceeds the risk threshold of 0.05). (Table 4 and 5).

Table 4.

Correlations

		Well-being total score	Expressivity total score
Pearson Correlation	Well-being total score	1.000	.137
	Expressivity total score	.137	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Well-being total score		.172
	Expressivity total score	.172	
N	Well-being total score	50	50
	Expressivity total score	50	50

Table 4.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	460.807	1	460.807	.913	.344[b]
	Residual	24234.873	48	504.893		
	Total	24695.680	49			

a. Dependent Variable: Well-being total score

b. Predictors: (Constant), Expressivity total score

Above we have the ANOVA table that shows that there is no statistically relevant regression model relevant between affective expressiveness and well-being since Sig. is greater than 0.05 (risk threshold).

4.3. Subscale correlations

- Shyness has a significant negative correlation with self-acceptance, $r(50)=-.57$, $p<.001$, environmental control $r(50)=-.53$, $p<.001$, and autonomy $r(50)=-.46$, $p<.001$.

- There are no significant correlations between factors of emotional expressiveness and well-being factors, with the exception of the impulse power factor that correlates positively, but weakly with the positive relationships factor $r(50)=.29$, $p<.001$.

V. DISCUSSIONS

This research was conducted to analyze the relationship between shyness, emotional expressiveness and well-being in a first year students. As mentioned above, three instruments have been used: the Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS; Cheek, 1983), The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (Gross, & John, 1997) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB, Ryff, 1989) with 42 items. The participants of the study were 50 students of the Cognitive-Behavioral Psychotherapy Master programme at Titu Maiorescu University.

The study confirmed the hypothesis that people with a higher level of well-being have a lower level of shyness than people with a low level of well-being. Research shows that the state of well-being can be estimated from the known levels of shyness, data confirming that there is a linear regression between shyness and well - being explains 22% of well-being values.

This result is in line with those in the literature where there are numerous studies conducted over time that have investigated the relationship between shyness the subjective well-being. Various studies have provided evidence that shy people report a higher level of negative emotions and a lower level of positive emotions (Eisenberg, 2000; Findlay and Coplan, 2008; Findlay et al., 2009; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002). Studies have shown that shy people have a lower level of life satisfaction than people who are not shy (John, & Gross, 2004; Neto, 1993; Rapee et al., 2011).

Rowsell and Coplan also measured the relationship between shyness and well-being in the study conducted in 2013 in two stages. Therefore stage 1 comprised 1159 participants and stage 2 included 400 participants - young adults who completed quizzes about the level of shyness, the quality of current romantic relationships, the beliefs associated with romantic attachments and well-being in a romantic relationship. Shyness was negatively associated with the quality of the relationship and the well-being and positive correlation with the beliefs was associated with insecure attachments (anxious attachment, insecure attachment). In any case, the beliefs associated with the more positive attachments mitigated the negative correlation between shyness and well-being.

Chinese researchers Li, Shi and Dang analyzed in 2014 the relationship between online communication and the subjective well-being from the psychological perspective of meeting the needs and referring to the mediating role of shyness and social self-efficacy. They have found

that the psychological need satisfied by online communication can stimulate social self-efficacy and increase the subjective well-being, but at the same time the psychological need satisfied by online communication can influence the level of shyness of the individual, which in turn decreases self-efficacy and leads to a lower level of well-being (Li, Shi, & Dang 2014).

In a study conducted by students of Turkish nationality (Satici & Tekin, 2017), it was revealed that high levels of shyness and loneliness are negatively correlated with the subjective well-being of the respondents. Loneliness also partially mediates the relationship between shyness and well-being, and the indirect effect of shyness on well-being through loneliness is significant.

This research has shown that there is no association between the state of well-being and emotional expressiveness, the study refuting the hypothesis that people with a higher level of well-being have a high level of emotional expressiveness compared to those who have a lower level of well-being what is in line with what we find in the literature. The study shows that the state of well-being cannot be estimated from the known values of emotional expressiveness, data showing that there is no significant correlation between emotional expressiveness and well-being.

Katz and Campbell (1994) express the same idea in a study by the University of British Columbia. Although there is consistent literature at the theoretical and empirical level that supports the idea that affective expressiveness is healthy, there is equally consistent literature that demonstrates the opposite. Although there are examples illustrating the potential positive relationship between affective expressiveness and well-being, the link between expressivity and well-being has not yet been clarified. There are studies that support both the good and the poor component of emotional expressiveness. King and Emmons (1990) analyzed research that indicates that both emotionally expressive and retained individuals may report an increased risk of health.

Research limitations

In this research, the limits refer to an unequal distribution of age and gender. The subjects are only master's students, and the percentage of women who answered the questionnaire is more noticeable than that of men.

For further research

The present study could be reproduced with a larger and more balanced group of participants in terms of age and gender in order to obtain results according to these variables; the study can be also performed on a representative segment of subjects diagnosed with social anxiety before and after going through a cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy process aimed at improving the results.

Another future direction of research could be oriented to a representative segment of Romanian students aged between 18 and 24, from rural areas, who start their undergraduate studies in Bucharest. There may be used The Multidimensional Social Perceptual Scale (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988), or the EQ-I Emotional Intelligence Scale (Bar-On, 2004), taking into account the research of Zhao, Kong and Wang (2013).

Based on the questionnaires applied in this research, one of the advanced assumptions has been confirmed, two have been partially confirmed and one hypothesis has not been supported:

- There is an association between shyness and the following components of well-being: autonomy, environmental control and self-acceptance, the study confirming the hypothesis that there is a negative correlation between shyness and well-being components.
- There is no association between the state of well-being and the emotional expressiveness, the study refuting the hypothesis that people with a higher level of well-being have a high level of emotional expressiveness compared to those who have a lower level of well-being.
- There is no significant correlation between the emotional expressiveness and well-being.
- There is no association between emotional expressiveness and well-being components, the study refuting the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between emotional expressiveness and components of well-being.

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