

Be Yourself to Feel Good:
The Influence of Trait Authenticity on Subjective Well-being

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Declaration

'I declare that this thesis that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of BA (Hons) Psychology is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.'

Word count:

Signed: Kitti Kolyankovszky

Date: 20.03.2020

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Abstract

Authenticity is a significant element of well-being. The current research aimed to examine whether components of subjective well-being are predicted by the subdimensions of trait authenticity. Another objective of the study was to test whether well-being affects authentic living. Psychologically validated self-report questionnaires were employed in an online survey form to measure trait authenticity and three subcomponents of well-being namely, self-esteem, positive affect and subjective vitality. The present quantitative research applied cross-sectional and correlational design to test the predictive role and the relationship between the variables. The population of the study (N=120) are partially students and were recruited by non-probability, convenience and snowballing sampling. Received data does not fully support the predictive role of trait authenticity on subjective well-being. However, self-alienation, a subdimension of authenticity, seems to negatively predict self-esteem and vitality. The study opened a conversation on the definitional and compositional issues of authenticity and well-being.

1. Introduction

1.1 Importance of Authenticity

The millennium brought a significant shift in the emphasis of psychology with the emergence of positive psychology. Positive emotions, human strengths, and positive institutions, workplaces have been identified as the three main themes of the trend (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi found it essential to respond to the potential for increasing individual and institutional satisfaction and well-being.

Several personality theorists have contemplated the role of an inner core or ‘true self’ in the creation of a fulfilling existence (Freud, 1961; Jung, 1953; Winnicott, 1960). The true self is recognised as moral and good (Strohming, Knobe, & Newman, 2017). The validation of true self can lead to less downward social comparison, separating from a negative other, self-handicapping, and conformity (Schimel, Arndt, Banko & Cook, 2004). In humanistic psychology, the true self is profound and crucial for well-being (Goldman & Kernis, 2002; Harter, 2002). Demonstration of the self can supply a firm foundation for experiencing meaning in life (Waterman, Schwartz & Conti, 2008). Researchers presume that self-knowledge is indispensable for authentic self-expression (Schlegel, Hicks, King & Arndt, 2011).

Authenticity can have an effect on people’s whole ‘being’ (Maté, 2011). Maté also states that authenticity is an evolutionary survival need. It is the capacity to know our feelings, to be in touch with our body, to be able to express who we are, and manifest who we are in our activities and relationships. It can influence the way one connects to another. Children learn unconsciously to sacrifice authenticity for attachment when it comes to family relationships. When children find themselves in a situation where being authentic is unsafe, they appease their parents’ expectations of how they should behave. So generally speaking, people seek recognition and validation from others instead of trying to provide it to themselves. Therefore, according to Maté, authenticity is immensely significant for people’s happiness and well-being.

Brené Brown (2012) came to similar conclusion while she was conducting research on shame. Brown thinks that authenticity is more complex phenomena than just a measurable psychological variable and can lead to happier life. It is an action and a choice what individuals must make every day. It enhances the chances to be able to be compassionate and also, to connect with other people in a more honest way. She considers authenticity as an antidote to shame and claims that vulnerability is the foundation of authenticity. Self-awareness and setting up healthy boundaries are essential for authentic being. She defines authenticity as *“the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are”* (Brown, 2010, p 50).

1.2 Trait Authenticity

Authenticity is linked with human identity and can be described as a compound psychological variable, and constant characterization of a personality (Vymetal, 2002). The person-centred conception describes authenticity as a *“consistency between the three levels of a person’s primary experience, their symbolized awareness, and their outward behaviour and communication”* (Barrett-Lennard, 1998, p. 82). If an individual is authentic, their actions are congruent with their beliefs and desires, despite external pressures. Theorists and researchers draw a firm distinction between trait and state authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Nezleck, 2007; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008). Trait authenticity is an individual’s inclination for a set of cognitions, feelings, or actions; while state authenticity is the actual set of cognitions, feelings, or actions in a particular situation (Endler, Parker, Bagby, & Cox, 1991). The current research will merely focus on trait authenticity although, there are researchers (Bowden, 2013; Ibarra, 2015) who highlighted the limitations of this construct.

Research in the area of authenticity (Ibarra, 2015) argues that trait authenticity in itself cannot lead to ‘full’ authenticity. Ibarra talks about the ‘authenticity paradox’ which means that

authenticity can only work if the individual is growing. Personal growth in turn, cannot be achieved if the individual stays authentic and within his/her comfort zone. She suggests that authenticity is not a trait, rather an outcome of a process of becoming your own person. Mark Bowden (2013), a behaviour and communication expert, also draws the attention to the limitation of authenticity. He claims that inauthenticity can assist in everyday interactions between people. Inauthenticity is the opposite of authenticity, it is a "psychological tension" (Harter, 2002, p. 383). Bowden also points out that if people do not choose behaviours beyond their natural instincts for what they like or do not like, people will miss several opportunities in their life to have a happier life and grow as an individual.

People can find it hard to disclose some aspects of their true self in a face-to-face context, especially if those aspects oppose with social norms and expectations (Tosun, 2012). These conflicting facets can be more easily disclosed in another social framework like on the Internet. Tosun found that people tend to be closer to their true self online. Not just the social context, but culture can be important factors when observing the relationship between authenticity and well-being. To explore the correlation between the two constructs, Robinson, Lopez, Ramos and Nartova-Bochaver (2013) looked at authenticity across 3 different cultures: United States, England and Russia, and confirmed that trait authenticity predicted and correlated significantly with well-being. Their findings reported that macro-environment has a significant impact on trait authenticity. Specifically, because participants from Russia were found to be less authentic than the American and English participants, it proposes that national culture modifies authenticity. Although, this interpretation of cultural influence has not been without its limitations as the authors did not examine the thinking style what justifies the observed cross-cultural differences (Slabu, Lenton, Sedikides & Bruder, 2014). The analysis of Slabu et al. (2014) reported that American participants had higher levels of trait authenticity than participants from India, China, and Singapore due to different cultural way of thinking.

Wood et al. (2008) conducted research testing the connection between authenticity and well-being. Correspondingly to Barrett-Lennard's definition (1998), Wood et al. characterised authenticity as a transparency of feelings and their meaning to the self, following of one's values and rejecting of external pressures. Throughout the research, they developed the Authenticity Scale to be able to measure the tripartite conception of trait authenticity. The concept and the scale consist of three components: self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. *Self-alienation* is the magnitude to which the individual experiences congruence between the conscious and actual awareness of the true self. *Authentic living* includes expressing emotions and behaving in line with one's values and beliefs. The extent to which an individual accepts the effect of the social environment and believes the necessity of conformity constructs the third subdimension, *accepting external influence*. The results of Wood et al.'s study showed that each subscale was strongly linked to self-esteem and subjective well-being. Further research in this area have supported the validity of Authenticity Scale (Vess, Schlegel, Hicks, & Arndt, 2014; White & Tracey, 2011). Its cross-cultural reliability and validity (Robinson et al., 2013), and factor structure (Gregoire, Baron, Menard, & Lachance, 2014) have also been confirmed. The purpose of the present study is to provide further evidence for Wood et al.'s findings.

1.3 Defining Well-Being

The definition of well-being is not uniformed in the psychology literature: it is most often associated with satisfaction, happiness, and positive psychological functioning (Diener, 2009). It also contains cognitive and emotional components, since everyone can judge and evaluate the quality of his or her well-being, while associating different (positive, negative) emotions with different aspects of well-being (Diener, 1984). As a result, we may also meet with expressions like subjective well-being, psychological well-being, mental well-being,

social well-being, or emotional well-being, which are often used interchangeably or complementarily (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). In another approach, Ryan and Deci (2001) differentiated between hedonic (pleasure-oriented) and eudemonic (self-fulfilling) well-being. The eudemonic view of well-being includes authenticity as part of well-being beside excellence, growth, and meaning (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Beyond the eudemonic interpretation of well-being, another theory, the PERMA model emerged as a further reflection of Martin Seligman's (2011) authentic pleasure theory. According to this, the five components of well-being are positive emotions, engagement, positive relationship, meaning in life, and accomplishment. Classical well-being literature deals primarily with subjective well-being, which appears as a kind of umbrella concept. It covers all aspects of an individual's assessment of different aspects of his or her life (e.g., living environment, lived events, physical-mental events, work) (Diener, 2009).

As subjective well-being is a broad term and includes different psychological constructs (Diener, 2009). The definition can be based on the researchers' interpretation and can consist of different aspects of well-being. In some cases, it is examined from a life evaluation perspective (Stephens, Deaton & Stone, 2015). Subjective well-being can be described as how individuals perceive the quality of their lives involving emotional and cognitive responses (Diener, 1984). It consists of *"three distinct but often related components of wellbeing: frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and cognitive evaluations such as life satisfaction"* (p. 542).

1.4 Authenticity & Subjective Well-Being

Subjective Well-Being

In humanistic psychology, authenticity is essential to healthy psychological development (Rogers, 1961; Winnicott, 1965). Furthermore, it is a key component of

subjective well-being (Harter, 2012). In the current study, the measurement of subjective well-being was partially built on Diener's definition (1984) and included positive affect as a component of well-being. Life satisfaction has been substituted with subjective vitality. As subjective vitality is regarded an aspect of both physical and eudemonic well-being (Akin, 2012), this exchange may nourish and add an extra layer to the phenomena of subjective well-being. As subjective well-being expresses the multidimensional evaluation of an individual's life (Salama-Younes, 2011), self-esteem was also incorporated into the measurement of well-being. It is a common perspective that happiness, what is usually used as a synonym for well-being, and self-esteem have such a strong relationship that it is difficult to separate them conceptually (Lyubomirsky, Tkach & DiMatteo, 2006).

Goldman and Kernis (2002) looked at various aspects of well-being while there were examining the effect of authenticity on psychological health. To assess well-being, they measured self-esteem, contingent self-esteem, daily positive and negative affect, and life satisfaction. They found that authenticity was significantly associated to each of the psychological well-being variables. Notedly, higher level of authenticity was linked to higher level of self-esteem and life satisfaction, and to less contingent self-esteem and daily negative affect. Authenticity has been shown to be linked to the subcomponents of subjective well-being such as positive affect, self-esteem, and vitality (Goldman & Kernis, 2002; Akin & Akin, 2014). Building upon these observations, one of the aims of the present research is to merge the three variables: positive affect, subjective vitality and self-esteem, and based on them, try to assess subjective well-being.

Positive Affect

Positive affect can be described as enjoying many emotions and moods (Diener et al., 2010). It can indicate both current (Diener, 2000) and future health and well-being

(Fredrickson, 2001). Building upon previous survey and experimental findings (Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013; Lenton, Slabu, Sedikides, & Power, 2013; Wood et al., 2008), the precursory assumption is that authenticity can raise people's level of positive emotions. Lenton et al.'s (2013) correlational findings demonstrated that positive emotions such as contentment, relaxation, and enthusiasm can be linked to authenticity. Participants of the study were asked to explain a situation where they felt 'most me' or 'least me'. 'Most-me' (authentic) situations were significantly related with greater positive affect and self-esteem, than 'least-me' (inauthentic) narratives.

Self-Esteem

According to Neff (2011), self-esteem is how people unconditionally evaluate themselves as a valuable individual. Self-esteem can be partially linked to well-being as it assists people to feel superior and self-confident. Further studies (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2015; Du, Li, Chi, Zhao & Zhao 2015) confirmed Neff's findings and stated that self-esteem is correlated to subjective well-being. Du, King and Chi (2017) distinguished three different types of self-esteem, and their five studies reported that personal and relational self-esteem are positive predictors of subjective well-being, while collective self-esteem only weakly relates to subjective well-being. In addition, they also posited that subjective well-being leads to better self-esteem.

Personal level authenticity has considerable implications for self-esteem level, and vice versa (Kernis and Goldman 2006). This connection was noticed by Happner et al.'s (2008) as well. They affirmed that self-esteem and authenticity have reciprocal relationship with each other. Their research sample consisted of 116 individuals who were assessed over a 2-week period. The analysis of the results revealed that authenticity is positively and significantly

related to self-esteem furthermore, authenticity can predict daily self-esteem. The mutual relationship of authenticity and self-esteem is aimed to be tested in the current research.

Vitality

The link between authenticity and subjective vitality has not been widely researched before 2010. A recent study from Tekin (2014) revealed that authentic living, a component of trait authenticity, is linked positively to subjective vitality. The results also showed that authenticity is an important predictor of subjective vitality. Other researchers (Akin & Akin, 2014) also confirmed this, showing that authenticity directly affects subjective vitality, and people with higher levels of authenticity are more likely to have high level of subjective vitality. Furthermore, positive affect has been associated with vitality (Penninx et al., 2000).

Despite the lack of research in this area before the 2010's, subjective vitality was firstly defined by Ryan and Frederick in 1997 who also designed a seven-item instrument, the Subjective Vitality Scale to measure vitality. They suggested that vitality is "*subjective experience of being full of energy and alive*" (p. 529). The Individual Difference Level version of the scale is focused on the degree of vitality which is generally true in people's lives. This version was positively related to self-actualisation and self-esteem and negatively to depression and anxiety (Salama-Younes, Montazeri, Ismail & Roncin, 2009). Subjective vitality is considered a feature of both physical and eudemonic well-being (Salama-Younes, 2011). A later version of the Subjective Vitality Scale by Bostic et al. (2000) excluded the second item of the original scale, as it was a negatively worded statement. One of the limitations of Bostic et al.'s research was its reliance on college participants. The present study utilises this measure but will include both college and general community populations to make the findings more generalisable and address this limitation.

1.5 Gender Differences in Authenticity

Conflicting evidence suggests that gender has an impact on authenticity (Robinson et al., 2013). A study by Lopez and Rice (2006) found that women achieved significantly higher scores than men in self-reported authenticity. However, other researchers found no difference in factor structure or means across males' and females' trait authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008). When developing the Authenticity Scale, Wood et al. (2008) contended that this scale demeans consistently across diverse demographic groups as their results showed invariance for genders and broad ethnic grouping. Robinson et al.'s (2013) cross-cultural study supports Lopez and Rice's finding as it reported significant relationship between gender and a subdimension of trait authenticity, namely authentic living. Female participants had higher level of authentic living than males. Whilst, this difference can be explained by macro-environmental factors like culture as suggested by the authors. Due to controversial findings of previous research, the proposed research will look at the gender difference of trait authenticity.

1.6 Rationale and Research Aims

It can be highlighted from the above researches, that neither authenticity nor well-being has a universal definition. Therefore, more research in this area is needed to be able to test, clarify and validate the different descriptions of the constructs. Consequently, the present study makes an attempt to add valuable observations to the existing literature. It will try to explore the limitations and the benefits of personal level authenticity on well-being.

The overall aim of the present study is to examine the effect of trait authenticity on subjective well-being which is assessed by positive affect, self-esteem and subjective vitality. Although, no previous research has been found on the validity to measure subjective well-being

by self-esteem, positive affect and subjective vitality, the above discussed studies confirmed their inter-relationship and significant contribution to well-being.

The present quantitative research employed cross-sectional and correlational design to test the predictive role and the relationship between the variables. The research objective concerns if there is any difference on trait authenticity between the two genders. Also, another purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between trait authenticity and the subscales of subjective well-being. The association between positive affect and vitality will be also analysed. To complete the disquisition of the subject, the study aims to test whether subjective well-being predicts authenticity.

1.7 Hypotheses

H1: There will be a statistically significant difference in levels of trait authenticity between males and females.

H2: It is hypothesized that authentic living, accepting external influence, self-alienation will significantly predict self-esteem.

H3: It is predicted that there will be a significant relationship between authentic living, accepting external influence, self-alienation and vitality.

H4: It is hypothesised that authentic living, accepting external influence, self-alienation will significantly predict positive affect.

H5: It is anticipated that positive affect will predict vitality.

H6: Subjective well-being as measured by self-esteem, positive affect, and vitality, will predict authentic living.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

The sample comprised a total 120 individuals, 42 males ($M=26.81$, $SD=6.41$) and 77 females ($M=26.03$, $SD=8.88$). One participant did not disclose their gender. The age of the participants is ranging from 18-73. The population of the current study involves adults, both students and non-students, who live in Europe. Non-probability sampling was applied involving convenience sampling as students from Dublin Business School were asked to participate in the study by completing an online questionnaire. Also, snowballing sampling was adopted as the survey has been posted on Facebook, and friends were asked to share the post with their friends and family. People could participate in the study if they were above 18 years of age, able to understand the research process, and able to understand English language. People refusing to give informed consent could not fill out the online survey as part of the exclusion criteria. The target sample did not include any subgroups. Participants did not receive any contribution or pay for the participation.

2.2 Design

The proposed quantitative research used a cross-sectional design as it examines the magnitude of causal effects of the independent variables upon the dependent variables of interest. Participants were not assigned to any groups. Hypothesis 1 employed a differential design aiming to assess whether there will be a statistically significant difference between males and females (IV) in relation to their levels of authenticity (DV). Three independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the differences between the independent variable and the subscales of authenticity namely, authentic living (DV), accepting external influence (DV), self-alienation (DV). To explore the relationships between the variables, correlational design was applied for five of the hypotheses. Multiple regression tests were conducted to

explore the relationship: 1) H2: between authentic living (PV), accepting external influence (PV), self-alienation (PV) and self-esteem (CV); 2) H3: between authentic living (PV), accepting external influence (PV), self-alienation (PV) and subjective vitality (CV); 3) H4: authentic living (PV), accepting external influence (PV), self-alienation (PV) and positive affect (CV). For Hypothesis 5, a linear regression was applied to measure whether subjective vitality (CV) is predicted by positive affect (PV). For Hypothesis 6, multiple regression was used to determine the relationship between subjective well-being, based on self-esteem (PV), positive affect (PV) and vitality (PV); and authentic living (CV).

2.3 Materials

Data was collected by an online survey which was created in Microsoft Forms. Participants needed only a computer or mobile phone, and internet access to complete the questionnaire. The survey started with an information sheet (*see Appendix A*) followed by a question on the consent and two demographic questions asking the participant's age and gender (*see Appendix B*). The questionnaire also assessed four psychological variables using the following scales.

The Authenticity Scale (AS) (Wood et al., 2008) (*see Appendix C*) measured the participants' trait authenticity, using 12 items and a 7-point Likert scale (1 = 'does not describe me at all' to 7 = 'describes me very well'). The instrument has three sub-scales: Authentic Living (AL) (items 1, 8, 9, and 11; e.g., "I think it is better to be yourself than to be popular."), Accepting External Influence (AEI) (items 3, 4, 5, 6; e.g., "I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others."), and Self-Alienation (SA) (items 2, 7, 10, and 12; e.g., "I don't know how I really feel inside."). Authentic Living is a positive indicator of authenticity, the other two subscales are negative indicators of authenticity. The four-item

subscales had internal consistency of .69 for Authentic Living, .78 for Accepting External Influence, and .78 for Self-Alienation.

A revised version of Ryan and Frederick's (1997) Subjective Vitality Scale (SV) (Bostic, Rubio & Hood, 2000) (*see Appendix D*) was applied to assess vitality. Ryan and Frederick developed two versions of the scale. In the present research, the Individual Difference Level Version was applied, which asks participants to reply to each item by indicating the degree to which it is generally true in their lives. The scale includes 6 items (e.g., "I feel alive and vital."), and each item is presented on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = 'not at all true' to 7 = 'very true'). The total score can range from 6 to 42, and the higher score indicates more subjective vitality. As in the original research, Bostic et al.'s study validated their thesis and recruited participants in two waves. Hence, there are two values for internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha for the first data set was 0.80, and 0.89 for the second, approximating the original values of 0.84 and 0.86.

The Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) (*See Appendix E*) measured the extent of positive and negative emotions what participants felt during the past week. The scale consists of twenty adjectives that describe different feelings. The Positive Affect subscale includes words like attentive and excited, the Negative Affect involves phrases like distressed and upset. The responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = 'very slightly or not at all' to 5 = 'extremely'). The total scores can vary between 10 and 50, with lower scores indicating low affect and higher scores indicating high affect. The internal consistency of the original study was 0.88 for the positive affect items and 0.87 for the negative affect items.

The *Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale* (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1965) (*See Appendix F*) assessed participants' global self-esteem. The tool consists of five positively worded (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.") and five negatively worded items (e.g., "At

times, I think I am no good at all.”). Responses could be given on a 4-point scale (from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 4 = ‘strongly agree’). The negatively worded items are reverse scored. The higher the score, the higher the self-esteem. The total ranges from 0-30 points. Scores within 15-25 are considered as normal self-esteem, scores higher predict high levels of self-esteem, and anything below 15 indicates low self-esteem. The RSE’s internal consistency ranges from 0.77 to 0.88. Its test-retest reliability ranges from 0.82 to 0.85. The questionnaire ended with the Debrief sheet (*see Appendix G*).

2.4 Procedure

Firstly, the research idea has been approved by the Dublin Business School Ethics Committee. Then, the survey was designed using Microsoft Forms in order to be able to collect data online. The link to the questionnaire was posted on the researcher’s private Facebook page along with a brief description of the study and the participation requirements. The same was shared and sent to possible participants, like students in Dublin Business School, via WhatsApp messaging option. The first page contained the information sheet with a detailed explanation and layout of the research. Participants were informed that the research explores experiences of well-being. They were assured of their anonymity, voluntary participation and that their responses will be kept confidential. Consents were registered under the first question of the survey. Participants could opt out from the study before submitting their answers on the last page. The final page also involved the contact details of the researcher and supervisor along with details for support services, such as AWARE and Samaritans, for the unlikely event if the survey has raised any negative emotions. Furthermore, it reiterated the aim of the study and thanked the participation.

2.5 Ethics

The ethical process began with submission of the research proposal to the Dublin Business School Ethics Committee. The Committee provided the ethical approval of the study based on the four main principles of the Code for Professional Ethics (The Psychological Society of Ireland, 2011). The research was designed and carried out in line with the core principles of PSI, namely: respect for the rights and dignity of the person; competence; responsibility; and integrity. There is no known risk of the research, and no vulnerable groups participated in the current study.

The following potential ethical risks were considered and addressed throughout the research:

1. *Voluntary Participation & Informed Consent*

As the survey could involve sensitive or triggering questions, it was important to raise the attention of the participants to the principle that their participation is voluntary. Participants received an information sheet outlining the details of the research. The first question of the survey asked for consent that they agree with participating in the study. Notification was provided that after submitting the survey, they will not be able to withdraw from the research as it is anonymous, and the survey cannot be traced back to the participant.

2. *Anonymity & Confidentiality & Data Protection*

When collecting data, participants were informed about their confidentiality and anonymity rights. The online survey did not ask for names or any potentially identifiable details. There was no free text box to type any additional comments or details. Data is stored in a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after 5 years.

3. *Debriefing*

A debriefing page was presented to inform the participants about the contact details of the researcher and the supervisor if they have any questions, along with a description of the

aim of the study. Contact details of support organisations were also provided for the unlikely event, if they have any upsetting feelings afterwards.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The summarised statistics indicated that 77 females (64.2%) and 42 males (35.0%) respectively, participated in the study. One participant did not reveal their gender in the survey (See Figure 1). The age of the participants is ranging from 18-73 (M=34.54) (See Figure 2).

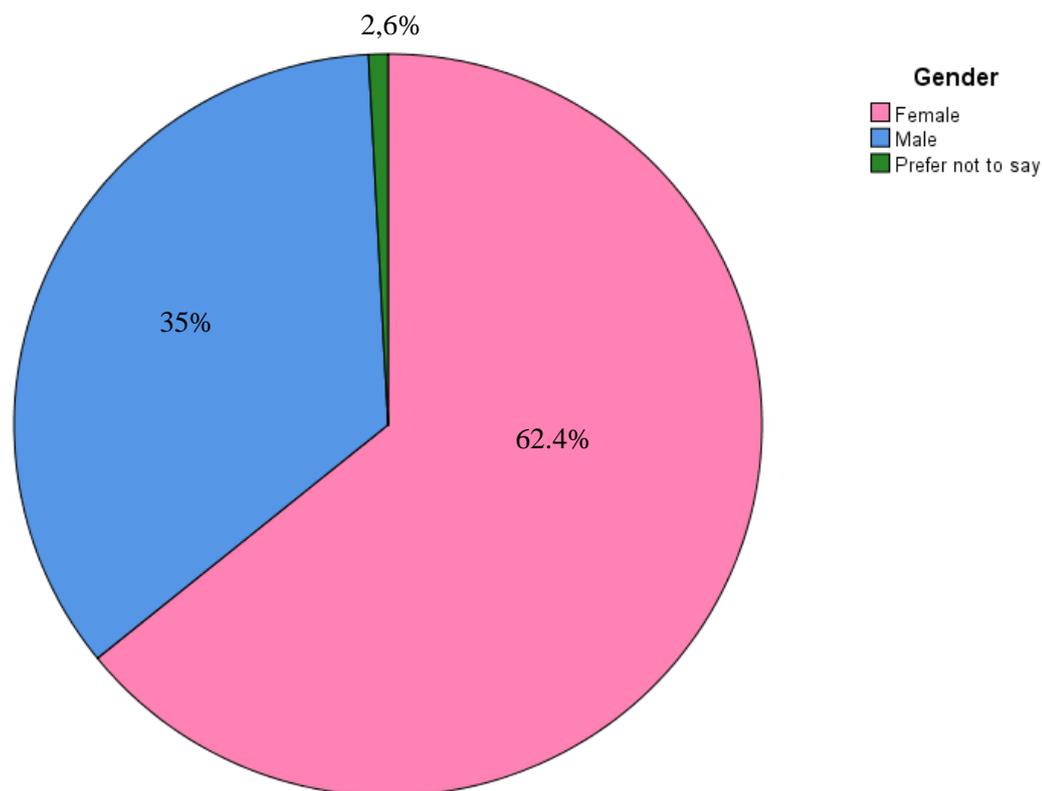


Figure 1: Pie chart displaying gender dispersion of participants

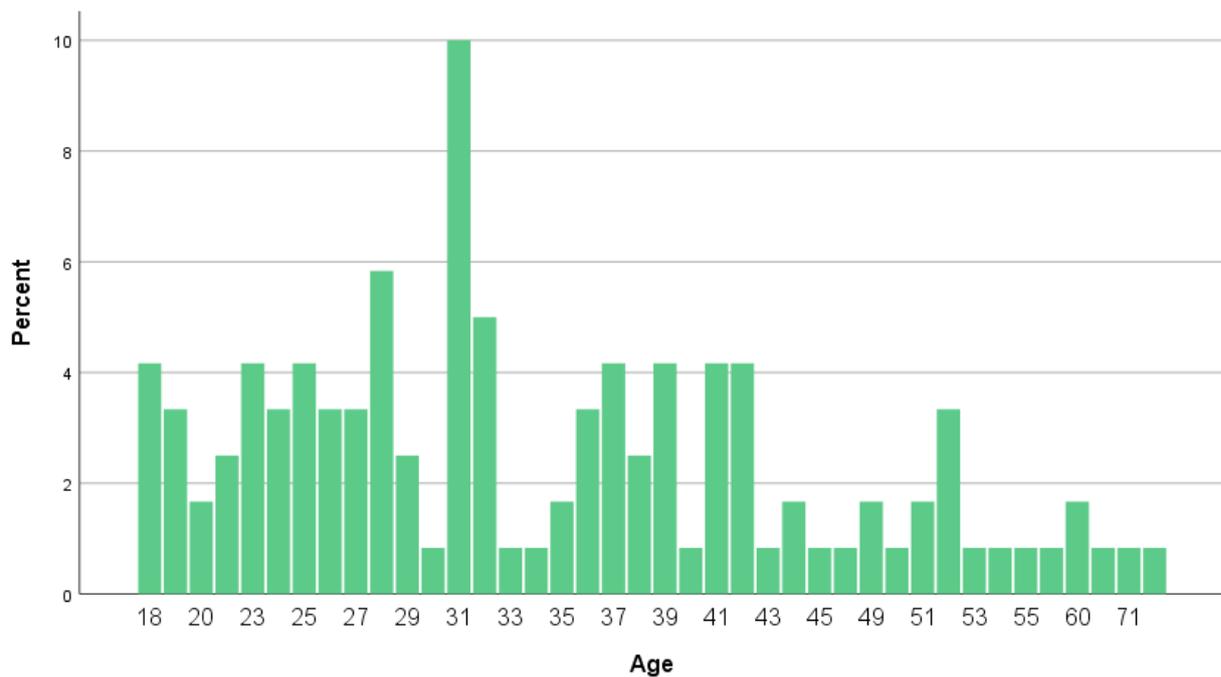


Figure 2: Bar chart displaying age dispersion of participants

A total of 120 participants filled out the questionnaire however, not all of them completed each scale used in the questionnaire. See Table 1 for statistics of completed measurements.

Table 1: Number of Completed Scales

	RSE	PANAS	AS - AL	AS - AEI	AS - SA	SV
Valid	112	118	113	117	114	120
Missing	8	2	7	3	6	0

Reliability of each scale and subscale was also analysed by running a Cronbach's Alpha Test of reliability. Cronbach's Alpha equalled .88 for the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Within the PANAS measurement (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988), the internal reliability was .88 for both positive and negative affect subscales. Subjective Vitality Scale's (Bostic, Rubio & Hood, 2000) Cronbach's Alpha was .92. Coefficient Alpha equalled .77 for authentic living; .76 for accepting external influence; and .78 for self-alienation; within the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008). All Cronbach's Alpha values are above the threshold which is .70 proving that the above scales are all reliable.

3.2 Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis 1

Independent samples t-tests were carried out in order to compare gender differences regards to one's trait authenticity based on authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation.

An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically non-significant difference between *authentic living* of males (M = 22.18, SD = 3.61) and females (M = 22.64, SD = 3.64) ($t(110) = .62, p = .535, CI(95\%) -.98 \rightarrow 1.89$). Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically non-significant difference between *accepting external influence* of males (M = 12.35, SD = 4.00) and females (M = 12.16, SD = 4.40) ($t(114) = -.23, p = .818, CI(95\%) -1.85 \rightarrow 1.46$). Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically non-significant difference between *self-alienation* of males (M = 10.33, SD = 4.98) and females (M = 9.57, SD = 4.91) ($t(111) = -.79, p = .434, CI(95\%) -2.70 \rightarrow 1.17$). Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

In sum, there is no significant difference between males' and females' level of trait authenticity (*See Figure 3*).

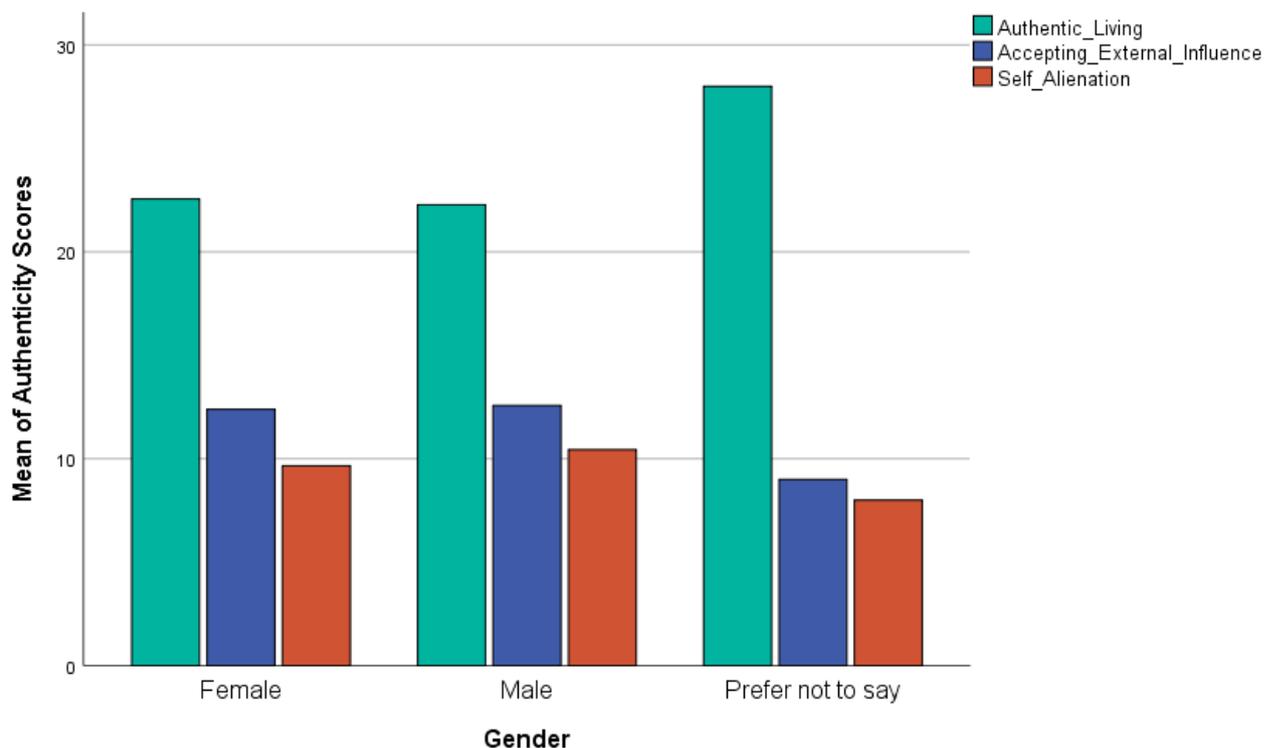


Figure 3: Bar chart displaying gender difference on authenticity

Hypothesis 2

Multiple regression was used to test whether the subscales of authenticity: authentic living, accepting external influence and self-alienation, were predictors of self-esteem. The results of the regression indicated that three predictors explained 42% of the variance ($R^2 = .42$, $F(3, 98) = 24.87$, $p < .001$). It was found that *authentic living* did not significantly predict self-esteem ($\beta = .16$, $p = .074$, 95% CI = $-.02, .50$) as did not *accepting external influence* ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .150$, 95% CI = $-.40, .06$) however, *self-alienation* negatively predicted *self-esteem* ($\beta = -.50$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = $-.77, -.36$). Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected for *authentic living* and *accepting external influence*, but it can be rejected for *self-alienation*.

These results propose that trait authenticity and self-esteem have correlation. Authentic living and accepting external influence do not predict one's level of self-esteem although, self-esteem is negatively predicted by self-alienation.

Hypothesis 3

Multiple regression was used to test whether the subscales of authenticity: authentic living, accepting external influence and self-alienation, were predictors of subjective vitality. The results of the regression indicated that three predictors explained 29% of the variance ($R^2 = .29$, $F(3, 106) = 15.75$, $p < .001$). It was found that neither *authentic living* ($\beta = .23$, $p = .013$, 95% CI = .11, .93), nor *accepting external influence* ($\beta = -.15$, $p = .116$, 95% CI = -.64, .07) significantly predicted vitality. However, *self-alienation* negatively and significantly predicted subjective vitality ($\beta = -.32$, $p = .001$, 95% CI = -.84, -.21). Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected for authentic living and accepting external influence, but it can be rejected for self-alienation.

It can be concluded that trait authenticity and subjective vitality have correlation. Authentic living and accepting external influence do not predict one's level of vitality although, vitality is negatively predicted by self-alienation.

Hypothesis 4

Multiple regression was used to test whether the subscales of authenticity: authentic living, accepting external influence and self-alienation, were predictors of positive affect. The results of the regression indicated that the three predictors explained 22% of the variance ($R^2 = .22$, $F(3, 105) = 11.29$, $p < .001$). It was found that neither *authentic living* ($\beta = .23$, $p = .021$, 95% CI = .07, .80), nor *accepting external influence* ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .180$, 95% CI = -.54, .10), nor *self-alienation* ($\beta = -.26$, $p = .010$, 95% CI = -.66, -.09) significantly predicted positive affect. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

The result indicates that trait authenticity and positive affect have correlation. Authentic living, accepting external influence and self-alienation do not predict one's level of positive affect.

Hypothesis 5

Simple linear regression was applied to measure whether subjective vitality was predicted by positive affect. The results of the regression indicated that the predictor explained 48% of the variance. It was found that positive affect significantly predicted subjective vitality ($F(1, 116) = 106.66, p < .001, R^2 = .93$) (Positive affect, $\beta = .69, p < .001, CI(95\%) .65, .96$) (see Figure 4). Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected. The result proposes that subjective vitality can be predicted by positive affect.

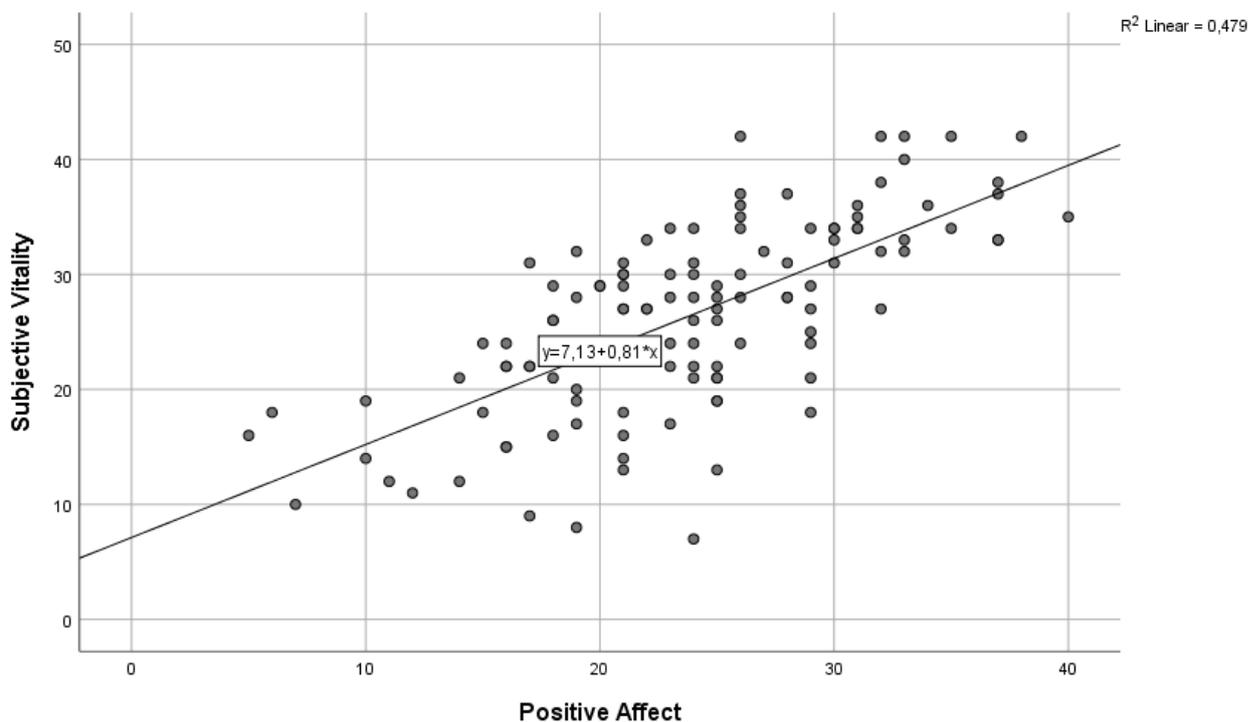


Figure 4: Scatter plot displaying positive affect levels across subjective vitality scores

Hypothesis 6

Multiple regression was used to test whether subjective well-being, based on self-esteem, positive affect and subjective vitality were predictors of authentic living. The results of the regression indicated that the three predictors explained 25% of the variance ($R^2 = .25$, $F(3, 100) = 12.56$, $p < .001$). It was found that neither self-esteem ($\beta = .20$, $p = .078$, 95% CI = $-.02, .27$), nor positive affect ($\beta = .21$, $p = .091$, 95% CI = $-.02, .24$), nor vitality ($\beta = .20$, $p = .117$, 95% CI = $-.02, .21$) significantly predicted authentic living. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Thus, subjective well-being does not predict authentic living.

3.3. Additional Analysis

Building upon Hypothesis 2, further analysis has been conducted on self-alienation and self-esteem to confirm their relationship. A Pearson correlation coefficient found that there was a strong negative significant relationship between self-alienation ($M = 9.82$, $SD = 4.90$) and self-esteem ($M = 30.25$, $SD = 5.63$) ($r(104) = -0.63$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This relationship can account for 39.69% of variation of scores. There is a negative correlation between self-alienation and self-esteem (*See Figure 5*).

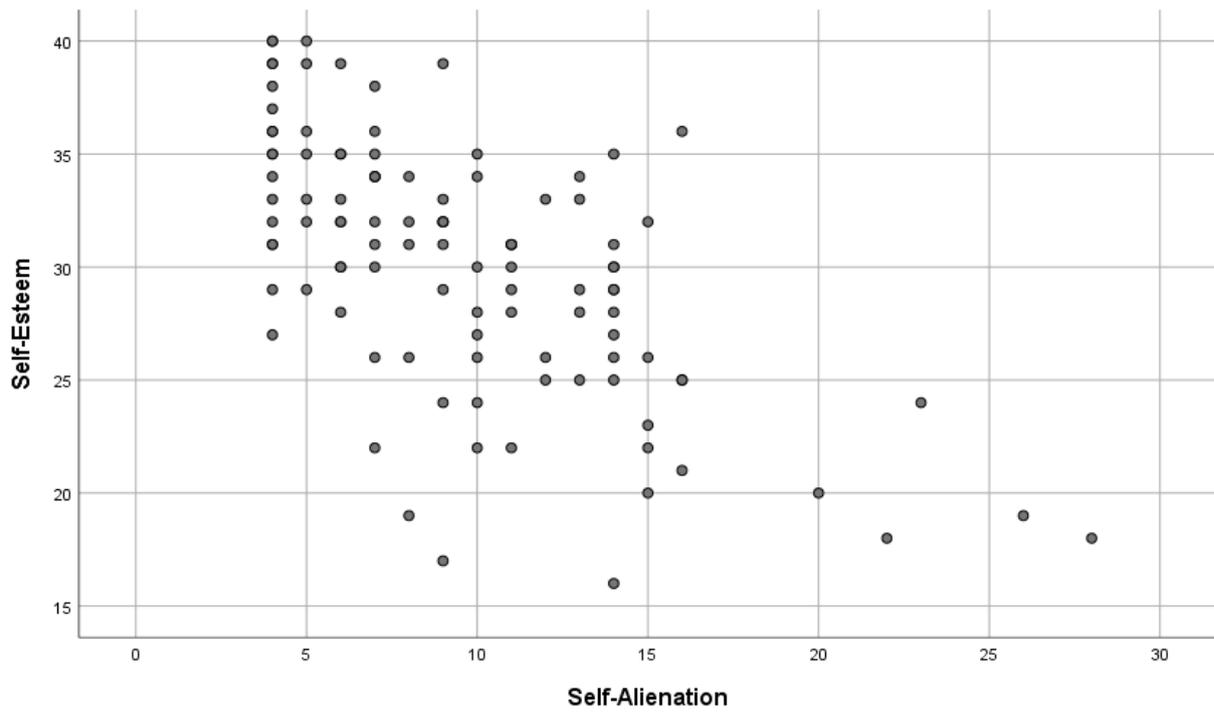


Figure 5: Scatter plot displaying self-alienation levels across self-esteem scores

4. Discussion

4.1 Interpretations of Results

The objective of the present study was to explore the effect of trait authenticity on subjective well-being based on self-esteem, positive affect and subjective vitality. The research aimed to examine whether components of subjective well-being are predicted by the subdimensions of trait authenticity. Another aim of the study was to test whether the relationship between authentic living and well-being is reciprocal, and well-being has an influence on authentic living. The analysis of the measurements employed in the current study reported strong internal reliability.

Analysis of the data did not support the first hypothesis, as it did not find significant difference on trait authenticity between males and females. In agreement with existing literature (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008), neither of the subscales of trait authenticity were influenced by gender. The invariance of genders in the current study conflicts Robinson et al.'s (2013) finding as females' level of authentic living was not higher than males' level. Wood et al. (2008) emphasized that their Authenticity Scale is consistent across diverse demographic groups, and the current results supported the gender element of this statement.

Proven correlation between trait authenticity and self-esteem was found when testing Hypothesis 2. Received data reveals that authentic living and accepting external influence did not predict self-esteem. However, self-alienation negatively predicted one's level of self-esteem meaning that when self-alienation increases, self-esteem decreases, or vice versa. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported. These findings are in contrast with previous research which verified significant relationship between authenticity and self-esteem (Goldman & Kernis, 2002; Lenton et al., 2013). Although each subdimensions of authenticity seem to have a strong association with self-esteem (Wood et al., 2008), the current research could not confirm the same.

The results of Hypothesis 3 reported that authentic living and accepting external influence did not predict people's level of subjective vitality. According to Akin and Akin (2014), subjective vitality is negatively predicted by accepting external influence and self-alienation and positively predicted by authentic living. The present findings are not in line with this research except self-alienation. The analysis of the third hypothesis showed similar outcome to the second hypothesis, as it found self-alienation as a negative predictor of the criterion variable, in this case for vitality. It is, however, important to note the limitations of Akin and Akin's research. The deviation between the present and the researchers' conclusions can be due to language or cultural barriers as Akin and Akin employed the Turkish version of Authenticity Scale to assess authenticity. These factors were not evaluated in their study. Also, the Turkish sample only included university students which means that the results cannot be equally compared with present findings as the current study's population included both student and non-student participants. Surprisingly, despite previous study's conclusion (Tekin, 2014), weak relationship has been found between authenticity and subjective vitality. Therefore, third hypothesis is only partially supported.

It was hypothesised that positive affect will be predicted by authenticity. Hypothesis 4 is not supported by the received data. Proven correlation has been found between trait authenticity and positive affect. Contrary to numerous studies (Fredrickson, 2001; Kifer et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2008), the predictor role of each subscale of authenticity has not been proven regarding positive affect. The reason for the invariance in findings remains unknown and challenged for further investigation. Due to unknown reasons, the strong relationship between authenticity and positive affect what has been proved in previous research (Lenton et al., 2013), has not been supported.

Significant result of Hypothesis 5 suggests that positive affect predicts subjective vitality which is in line with previous research (Penninx et al., 2000). Present findings show

that positive affect positively predicted people's level of vitality meaning that when positive affect enhances, the level of vitality increases as well. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

The findings propose that authentic living is not predicted by the subdimensions of subjective well-being. Hence, Hypothesis 6 is not supported. Results reported low correlation between subjective well-being measured by positive affect, self-esteem and vitality, and authentic living. Past research (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Happner et al. 2008) considered the relationship between authenticity and well-being to be reciprocal. This statement has not been supported by the current study.

In conclusion, the results are not consistent with past research. Data does not fully support the connection between trait authenticity and subjective well-being. This can be partially explained by cultural factors, which can have an influence on assessing authenticity as suggested by Robinson et al. (2013). The cultural context has not been taken into account when the study was designed. However, it must be remembered that the above explanation is post hoc and speculative.

4.2 Strengths and Limitations

Despite of the non-significant results, there are some strengths of the study. Firstly, the sample was not homogenous as it consisted of both student and non-student population, and the age range was quite wide: 18 to 73. These factors assisted the study to become more generalisable and representative of the population. Secondly, the designed questionnaire collecting the data was easy to interpret and required little time to complete. The psychologically validated research tools employed in the study have high reliability and internal consistency within the sample, which makes the findings credible and the conclusions drawn from them well-founded. Moreover, this research has highlighted the need for definitional and measurement clarity for both authenticity and well-being. Researches on

definitions and comparative studies on measurements are still under-represented, which was illustrated during the past research review. Lastly, the current research drew the attention to the possible utilisation of subjective vitality for measuring subjective well-being.

The benefits of this research should be considered in light of the limitations. Foremost, the design of the study is correlational hence, causal inferences cannot be made. As qualitative measure was not utilised for the variables perhaps, a mixed method research could give more insight into the subject of the study and into the reasons behind the results. Furthermore, the study could not examine cross-cultural differences as it did not collect data on nationality. This made it impossible to explore the potential impact of the macro-environment on authenticity which deemed to be important according to previous research. The data reported here for trait authenticity, self-esteem, positive affect, and subjective vitality are limited to self-reported data. Since the proportions of variance explained were very low, it is hard to make any solid conclusions about the findings. Finally, subjective well-being was measured based on three constructs, which are although significant components of well-being, have not been merged in prior studies to assess such a complex construct as well-being.

4.3 Future Research and Implication

Future research should consider the benefits and shortcomings of the study. An additional qualitative element to the study or a mixed method research would be beneficial in this field to allow for explanation of the responses received in the surveys. Indisputably, greater clarity over the definition is required before we can measure and evaluate the efficacy of authenticity, well-being, and their reciprocal relationship. However, researchers must acknowledge the potential difficulty they have to face as authenticity can be hard to describe due to “limits of language” (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 284). Moreover, researchers may investigate whether state authenticity reflects the phenomena of authenticity better than trait

authenticity. Longitudinal studies could address the causality between authenticity and well-being. Furthermore, researchers may wish to explore whether subjective vitality could be a valid and reliable measure of subjective well-being. As current findings indicate, self-alienation has an impact on vitality and self-esteem hence, additional research should be conducted on the effect of self-alienation for different components of well-being. Further studies may examine the downside of authenticity as past research did not focus on the effect of extreme level of authenticity if that exists or, continue to investigate the benefits of inauthenticity. Whilst existing research supply a foundation of describing and examining authenticity, more studies are required to strengthen that base and link it more powerfully to well-being.

One of the applications of the current research could be the use of validated scales. The reliable measurements allow researchers to explore the potential of the examined constructs. It is also recommended that researchers should focus on the macro-environmental effects on both authenticity and well-being, which may explain the non-significant results of the present study. Including cultural impact can assist for deeper understanding of the subject. Mental health professionals may conduct more research to measure the effectiveness of authenticity improvement programs to assist students enhance their authenticity and have higher level of well-being. The literature on the importance of authenticity could be used in arguments against social media and online influencers where uniqueness is not a value.

4.4. Conclusion

There is emerging empirical evidence that authenticity contributes to well-being; however, the present study could only partially contribute to previous literature. The current investigation indicates that trait authenticity does not influence subjective well-being. No difference was found between males' and females' level of trait authenticity. Results suggest that trait authenticity does not predict self-esteem, positive affect and subjective vitality. Albeit,

self-alienation, a subdimension of trait authenticity, seems to negatively predict self-esteem and subjective vitality. The mutual relationship between trait authenticity and subjective well-being has not been approved. Therefore, the current findings do not enhance our understanding of the associations between authenticity and well-being.

The study opened a conversation on the definitional and compositional issues of authenticity and well-being. It also brought in vitality, a potentially valuable component to subjective well-being. Researchers should continue to evaluate the impact of authenticity on well-being. Hopefully, the limitations of the study may assist other researchers in designing studies based on clearer and more well-founded definitions.

Eventually, the goal of positive psychology research is to collect valuable information what can be applied to effective tools that can increase people's well-being. Even, if the current results did not fully support this concept, the discussed literature surely did.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Information Sheet Well-Being Research Study

My name is Kitti Kolyankovszky and I am conducting research in the Department of Psychology that explores experiences of well-being. This research is being conducted as part of my final year thesis in Dublin Business School and will be submitted for examination.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves completing this anonymous survey. While the survey asks some questions that might cause some minor negative feelings, it has been used widely in research. If any of the questions do raise difficult feelings for you, contact information for support services are included on the final page.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part.

Participation is anonymous and confidential. Thus, responses cannot be attributed to any one participant. For this reason, it will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the questionnaire has been submitted.

The questionnaires will be securely stored in electronic format on a password protected computer.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the questionnaire that you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact me [REDACTED]@mydbs.ie. My supervisor can be contacted at [REDACTED]@dbs.ie
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix B

1. Do you consent to taking part in this research?

Yes No

2. What age are you?

3. Please indicate your gender

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

Appendix CAuthenticity Scale

4. Please indicate the degree from 1 (does not describe me at all) to 7 (describes me very well) to which it is generally true in your life.
1. I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular.
 2. I don't know how I really feel inside.
 3. I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others.
 4. I usually do what other people tell me to do.
 5. I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do.
 6. Other people influence me greatly.
 7. I feel as if I don't know myself very well.
 8. I always stand by what I believe in.
 9. I am true to myself in most situations.
 10. I feel out of touch with the 'real me.
 11. I live in accordance with my values and beliefs.
 12. I feel alienated from myself.

Scoring:

Total Items 1, 8, 9, and 11 for Authentic Living; Items 3, 4, 5, and 6 for Accepting External Influence; and Items 2, 7, 10, and 12 for Self-Alienation.

Appendix D

Revised version of Ryan and Frederick's (1997) Subjective Vitality Measure

5. Please indicate the degree from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very true) to which it is generally true in your life.
1. I feel alive and vital
 2. Sometimes I am so alive I just want to burst
 3. I have energy and spirit
 4. I look forward to each new day
 5. I nearly always feel awake and alert
 6. I feel energized

Scoring:

Total items 1 to 6. The total score can range from 6 to 42, and the higher score indicates more subjective vitality.

Appendix E**Positive and Negative Affect Scale**

6. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past week.

(1) = Very slightly or not at all (2) = A little (3) = Moderately (4) = Quite a bit (5) = Extremely

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
1. Interested	1	2	3	4	5
2. Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
3. Excited	1	2	3	4	5
4. Upset	1	2	3	4	5
5. Strong	1	2	3	4	5
6. Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
7. Scared	1	2	3	4	5
8. Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
9. Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
10. Proud	1	2	3	4	5
11. Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
12. Alert	1	2	3	4	5
13. Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
14. Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
15. Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
16. Determined	1	2	3	4	5
17. Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
18. Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
19. Active	1	2	3	4	5
20. Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring:

Add the scores for the 10 positive words and separately for the 10 negative words. Now you have your positive and negative scores. The scores generated will vary along the scale of 10 – 50, with lower scores indicating low (positive or negative) affect and higher scores indicating high (positive or negative) affect.

The 10 items for POSITIVE (PA) affect are:

- attentive, interested, alert, excited, enthusiastic, inspired, proud, determined, strong and active.

The 10 items for NEGATIVE (NA) affect are:

- distressed, upset, hostile, irritable, scared, afraid, ashamed, guilty and nervous, jittery.

Appendix FRosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

7. Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by using the scales below.

If you strongly agree with the statement circle SA.

If you agree with the statement circle A.

If you disagree with the statement circle D.

If you strongly disagree with the statement circle SD.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times, I think I am no good at all.*
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.*
6. I certainly feel useless at times.*
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.*
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.*
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Scoring:

SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0.

Items with an asterisk (Items 2; 5; 6; 8; 9) are reverse scored, that is, SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3.

Sum the scores for the 10 items. The higher the score, the higher the self-esteem.

Appendix G

Debrief Sheet

Thank you for your answers. Your response has been recorded.

The overall aim of the proposed study is to examine the effect of authenticity on well-being and vitality. If you have any questions regarding the study and its findings, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]@mydbs.ie .

If you feel that answering this survey has raised some issues for you, please consider contacting some of the support services listed below, or speak to a friend, family member or professional.

Aware:

The Aware Support Line 1890 303 302
Available Monday – Sunday, 10am to 10pm.
Email for support at: supportmail@aware.ie

Samaritans

Call on: 116 123
Available 24hrs a day, 365 days a year. Free to call.
Email: jo@samaritans.org