



# Authenticity, Volition, and Motivational Persistence Predicting Well-being: a Self-determination Theoretical Perspective

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate a mediation model explaining the adults' well-being. The prediction power of authenticity, motivational persistence, volitional processes of well-being, and the satisfaction of autonomy, relatedness, and competence as mediators in those relationships were examined. To date, most studies have investigated the relationship between motivational processes and well-being in Western and individualistic cultures. Considering that cultural orientation is a potential factor that affects well-being, we tested the link between motivational processes, need satisfaction, and well-being in a collectivistic, non-Western Romanian sample. Participants were 850 adults from the general population (51.50% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 31.18$  years). The results showed that authenticity, motivational persistence, and volitional processes are significant predictors of well-being. Also, this study showed that some of the decoding keys of those three positive relationships were autonomy, relatedness, and competence from self-determination theory. These results extend the current knowledge about determinants involved in well-being and self-determination theory impact. At the end of the study, the implications of the findings, the limits of the present study, and future research suggestions are discussed.

**Keywords** Authenticity · Motivational persistence · Volition · Well-being · Self-determination theory

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In general, people are looking for happiness and satisfaction in their life, and over the years, a considerable number of studies focus on well-being and life satisfaction's importance in people's lives (Maddux, 2018). People with greater well-being and life satisfaction are more successful in many life domains such as the quality of social and marital relationships, success in work settings, and physical and mental health outcomes (Pavot & Diener, 2008; Diener & Chan, 2011). Those people are more social, altruistic, and active; have better conflict resolution skills; and are likely to earn more money (Maddux, 2018). Romanian's well-being is among the lowest of all the European Union countries (Eurostat, 2018). Romanians are also more characterized by surviving values rather than developmental ones (Pascalau, Gavreliuc, Gouveia, & Coleho, 2021). This is why further research on well-being is needed in the Romanian context.

### **Authenticity, Motivational Persistence, Volitional Processes, and Well-being**

More research showed two major perspectives regarding well-being conceptions: eudaimonic and hedonic perspectives (Tennant et al., 2007). *Eudaimonic* well-being refers to self-realization, making progress toward attaining one's valued goals, and living a meaningful life (Maddux, 2018). *Hedonic* well-being refers to the subjective experience of happiness, life satisfaction, and the balance between positive and negative experiences and events (Maddux, 2018). Empirical evidence showed a considerable common variance between hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives and, in reality, those have psychological mechanisms that operate together (Kashdan et al., 2008). These multi-dimensional aspects of well-being include setting a purpose in life, personal growth, authentic relations with others, environmental support, self-acceptance, and autonomy. Therefore, in this paper, we used both well-being perspectives, to obtain a more comprehensive assessment method.

Prior research has shown that various external factors, such as relationship quality, socio-economic status, family-work-related events, or positive emotional experience affect people's level of life satisfaction and well-being (Luhmann et al., 2012; Maddux, 2018). Moreover, well-being is predicted not only by external events, but also by internal factors such as personality traits, self-esteem, optimism, and other (Maddux, 2018). Sometimes, people set and follow some goals that are not authentic with their needs, interests, value, or desires. This inner discrepancy leads to frustration and unsatisfactory life. Thus, based on self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985), we can argue that significant and relevant goals can be reflected in greater effort, motivation, perceived importance, and sense of accomplishment.

Authenticity is defined as congruence between one's internal states, awareness, and true self (Wood et al., 2008). Authenticity in Wood et al.'s (2008) perspective involves three components: self-alienation, authentic living, and acceptance of external influence. The self-alienation component refers to the ability to remain in touch with their true self and the degree to which people are connected or aware of their own emotions, beliefs, values, and experiences. Authentic living can be defined as the congruence between one's true self and one's thoughts, behaviors, and

actions. Acceptance of external influence refers to the degree to which an individual understands and accepts other people's influence and allows other people to control their actions (Boyratz et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2008). Previous research showed that authenticity is related to positive affect, positive social interaction, high stress resilience, and adversity (Rivera et al., 2019). High levels of authenticity lead to a harmonious equilibrium in most life domains, staying in healthy relationships, satisfying real needs, and a sense of inner peace. Consequently, those types of positive approaches provide high levels of well-being and a confident life perspective (Boyratz et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2008).

There is considerable evidence that well-being and life satisfaction are highly related to the most important life goals and success (Hofer & Chasiotis, 2003), which results in the question: what leads to personal fulfillment? People's volitional processes refer to their desires, wants, or purposes together with a belief about satisfying them and converting intentions into actions (Keller, 2012). Motivational persistence is defined as a person's predisposition to persist with the effort to achieve a selected goal, finding the personal resources to overcome the obstacles, fatigue, stress, and other distractors (Constantin, 2008). Motivational persistence contains three subdomains: long-term purposes pursuing (i.e., to remain committed to resource-consuming goals in the long term), current purpose pursuing (i.e., the everyday persistence and to remain constant in effort), and recurrence of unattained purposes (i.e., the ability to remain committed to blocked or suspended pursuits; Constantin et al., 2011). These two fundamental mechanisms could lead to achieving goals, higher levels of satisfaction or optimism, and getting to discharge the tension attached to the frustrating events (Bostan et al., 2014). The effort and final satisfaction are maintained by high levels of motivation and volitional processes that focus on purposes and own needs. By nature, active, curious, and self-motivated individuals are more enthusiastic and manifest less anxiety or depression symptoms (Briki, 2016), and, as such, we expected greater levels of well-being.

## Need Satisfaction Model as a Mediator

According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) need satisfaction model, trying to pursue a personal goal, people should be aware of their psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness in order to experience well-being. Psychological needs are characterized as the sense of self-reliance and control of their own behavior (i.e., autonomy), feeling of proficiency, and receiving appreciation (i.e., competence), and need to have close interpersonal relationships (i.e., relatedness). When people have those needs satisfied, they are autonomously motivated and can increase psychological growth and well-being (Smith et al., 2011).

Social context modulates our behavior and perspectives through life, and, sometimes, it is hard to remain fully authentic without social costs. However, succeeding in keeping an authentic self and finding an appropriate environment and activities alike implies that most choices and behaviors are in concordance with our inner desires and needs (Ryan & Ryan, 2018). Previous studies showed that following the intrinsic goals positively predicted changes in satisfaction of each psychological