

## ARTYKUŁY

[*Articles*]

### HEDONIC AND EUDAIMONISTIC WELL-BEING: INTEGRATION OF THE PERSPECTIVES AS A DIRECTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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**Summary.** In the literature on mental well-being, there is a clear division between defining this concept in the hedonistic trend (as high intensity of positive affect, low intensity of negative affect and satisfaction with life) and eudaimonism (as self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, a sense of meaning and purpose in life). Meanwhile, empirical research on the convergence of both perspectives indicates that the most accurate way to conceptualize this construct is their integration. This article will present the most important reports in this field, as well as theoretical models which are a proposal for a synthesis of hedonistic and eudaimonistic categories. The discussion highlights the advantages of a broad conceptualization of well-being for the accuracy of psychological research conducted in this area.

**Key words:** well-being, happiness, hedonism, eudaimonia

### Introduction

The issue of mental well-being arouses unflagging interest of psychologists representing both the international (Diener, Larsen, 1984; Ryff, 1989; Seligman, 2002a, 2002b; Diener et al., 2017) and Polish (Czapiński, 1994, 2015; Heszen-Niejodek, 1996; Trzebińska, 2008) scientific community. This interest is justified by the results of numerous studies that indicate the great importance of this construct for the broadly understood human functioning, including in the health (e.g. Pressman, Cohen, 2012; Diener et al., 2015), interpersonal (e.g. Boehm, Lyubomirsky, 2008; Priller,

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Schupp, 2011) and professional spheres (e.g. Harter et al., 2010). As Cierpiałkowska and Sęk (2006) claim, the last century in psychology was a time of special interest and concern for human mental health, and this was expressed, among other things, in the concentration of empirical efforts of researchers on well-being, which, according to the current definition adopted by the WHO, de facto constitutes the idea of health<sup>2</sup>.

In the literature on mental well-being, two research orientations clearly emerge: the hedonistic perspective and the eudaimonistic perspective. This division is taken into account in most reviews of this concept (including Ryan, Deci, 2001; Trzebińska, 2008; Czapiński, 2015), and it is also reflected in the results of empirical research, which, based on one of two ways of conceptualizing well-being, seem to form almost disjointed sets. Meanwhile, the categorization into hedonistic and eudaimonistic well-being, which has its source in philosophy, is not fully justified on empirical grounds. The results of many psychological studies addressing the issue of the convergence of both approaches to well-being indicate not only the legitimacy, but also the need to include both hedonistic and eudaimonistic categories in the definition of this concept. However, this reflection seems to be insufficiently present in the scientific space, where current publications still largely consistently refer to only one of the two strands of research on well-being (e.g. Arslan, 2022; Iyer, Sharma, Sahasrabudhe, 2022; Lee-Fong, Daniels, Slifka, 2022). The aim of this article is to present reports on the complementarity of the hedonistic and eudaimonistic approaches in defining psychological well-being, and to present selected theoretical models proposing the integration of both terms. In order to ensure the clarity of the argument, the first part contains a brief description of the hedonistic and eudaimonistic conceptualizations of well-being dominant in the literature on the subject.

## Hedonistic perspective

The hedonistic perspective of well-being stems from an ancient philosophical system initiated by Aristippus of Cyrene, according to whom the most important goal of human life is to experience pleasure (Kahneman, Diener, Schwarz, 1999). Well-being in the hedonistic perspective has been defined by psychologists as subjective well-being (Diener, 1984) and is defined as a person's general attitude towards one's own life in its various areas. The assessment of life includes a cognitive and an emotional component. The first of them is understood as the degree to which individuals assess the level of satisfaction of their aspirations, i.e. how much they manage to achieve what they consider important in life and how satisfied they are with their life. The second relates to the extent to which an individual's affective

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<sup>2</sup> "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2014, s. 1).

experiences are pleasurable and gratifying, that is, how good he or she usually feels (Diener, 2012). Subjective well-being as a psychological construct includes three components: (1) cognitive assessment of life satisfaction; (2) experiencing positive affect; (3) no negative affect (Diener, 1984; Diener, Lucas, 1999; Ryan, Deci, 2001). The second and third factors related to the balance of emotional experiences are additionally referred to in the literature as emotional well-being (Kahneman, Deaton, 2010; Czapiński, 2015). The three-factor model of subjective well-being is the most frequently adopted method of operationalizing this construct in research (Busseri, Sadava, 2011; Disabato et al., 2016).

It is worth noting that the leading representative of this trend – the American psychologist Ed Diener – clearly indicated that when reflecting on subjective well-being, one should not succumb to simple evaluation. The hedonistic vision of happiness may seem relatively simple, related only to the experience of physical pleasure and excitement. In fact, however, this perspective goes far beyond bodily sensations and simple entertainment, and positive affect and satisfaction with life, due to the fact that they appear as a result of achieving goals important for the individual, may in fact indicate what a person's aspirations are aimed at (Diener, Fujita, 1995; Diener, Sapyta, Suh, 1998).

To sum up, the hedonistic trend is associated with the concept of subjective well-being, which is defined by the increase in life satisfaction and positive emotional balance.

## **Eudaimonistic perspective**

In research on well-being conducted in the quantitative paradigm, the hedonistic approach was formed in the very beginning and remained dominant (Czapiński, 2015). No less important and clearly present in the literature on the subject is the second way of understanding the mental well-being of man, which assumes that we should not reduce it only to pleasure, but that humans are satisfied with their lives and that it gives them more joy than suffering, does not necessarily mean happiness and fulfillment. The eudaimonistic trend in psychological research on well-being comes from the philosophical systems represented by Aristotle and the Stoics, who clearly denied reducing human happiness to emotional experiences and criticized the hedonistic vision of man as a slave to sensory pleasures (Ryff, Singer, 2008; Czapiński, 2015). For the supporters of the second way of perceiving well-being, in the literature referred to as eudaimonistic well-being (Waterman, 1993), the measure of happiness is the achievement of valuable goals, a sense of meaning in life, a good and authentic life, and not necessarily pleasant at the same time (Czapiński, 2015).

The eudaimonistic tradition in well-being research is represented by several researchers. One representative of this trend, among others, is Martin Seligman, who is the initiator of the creation of positive psychology and the founder of the

Society of Positive Psychology (Trzebińska, 2008). In his scientific work, the author tries to answer the question of how a person can achieve authentic happiness. He pays special attention to those experiences that strengthen the six cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, love, justice, temperance, and spirituality. It also emphasizes the need to develop the ability to distinguish between what is pleasant and what is gratifying (Seligman, 2002b). The eudaimonistic trend in research on well-being is also represented by Snyder and Lopez (2002) – editors of the first textbook of positive psychology, and Bauer and his team (2008), who undertake narrative research in this field. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) should also be mentioned among the representatives of the eudaimonistic trend, who focuses on the state of flow, defining it as a state of mind that appears as a result of human involvement in the implementation of relatively difficult tasks, but adapted to their capabilities. Kashdan, Biswas-Diener and King (2008) draws attention to the multitude of approaches to well-being in the eudaimonistic trend, and also emphasizes that the consensus of researchers as to the method of its operationalization and measurement is much lower compared to the representatives of the hedonistic trend.

However, Czapiński (2015) points out that Ryff (1989) is considered to be the leading representative of the eudaimonistic perspective in quantitative research on well-being. The model of *psychological well-being* proposed by the author is based on the earlier achievements of developmental psychologists, including Erikson, Buhler and Neugarten, and researchers representing the humanistic and existential trends in psychology, including Maslow, Rogers, Allport and Frankl. The terms formulated on the basis of clinical psychology by Jung and Jahoda were also used. By conducting an extensive analysis of the literature on the subject, Ryff built a model of well-being which is currently the most common way to frame this construct in the eudaimonistic trend, widely used in research not only in the field of psychology (see Ryff, Singer, 2002). According to it, psychological well-being is defined by the degree of implementation of six dimensions, which are: (1) Self-acceptance – a key aspect of psychological well-being. It means a positive attitude towards one's own Self and the awareness and acceptance of one's own positive and negative qualities. It also requires coming to terms with past failures. (2) Positive relationships with others – understood as the ability to establish and maintain intimate and satisfying relationships and the ability to empathize (3) Personal development – the ability to constantly realize one's potential, improve skills and develop new opportunities. (4) Life purpose – means the belief that one's life is directed towards the implementation of an important goal, the ability to formulate and carry out life tasks, and having beliefs that provide a sense of self-control and meaning in life. (5) Control over the environment – defined as the ability to create the surrounding environment in such a way that it meets our needs and capabilities as much as possible. It is an active form of adapting to the environment, requiring one's own initiative and effort. (6) Autonomy – refers to the ability to act in accordance with one's own beliefs, regardless of the expectations

of others and social approval. It means self-determination, independence in action and thinking, and resistance to external pressure (Ryff, 1989; Ryff, Keyes, 1995; Ryff, Singer, 2008).

To sum up, in the eudaimonistic trend, well-being is most often understood as psychological well-being, associated with high self-acceptance, the ability to build positive relationships with others, a sense of autonomy and directing one's life towards the achievement of valuable goals.

## One well-being or several?

The division into hedonia and eudaimonia in terms of mental well-being is clearly emphasized in the literature. The results of the research, which were aimed at checking the complementarity of both perspectives, seem to question the treatment of life satisfaction and positive emotional balance as well as the sense of life, self-acceptance and autonomy as two separate categories constituting human happiness. The most important reports in this field will be discussed below.

First of all, attention should be paid to studies that refer to the most common ways of defining well-being within each of the two perspectives, i.e. Diener's (1984) three-factor model of subjective well-being and Ryff's six-factor model of psychological well-being (1989).

A 2002 study by Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff, conducted with a representative sample of Americans, showed that the strength of the correlation between hedonistic and eudaimonistic well-being is high at  $r = .84$ . Gallagher and his team, also involving the American population, in a series of studies from 2009 obtained similar correlation coefficients:  $r = .92$  for the first study and  $r = .78$  for the second study (Gallagher, Lopez, Preacher, 2009). In a similar study conducted in Great Britain in 2009, the results were comparable and indicated a high degree of dependence:  $r = .76$  (Linley et al., 2009). The above results question the discriminatory validity of subjective well-being and psychological well-being, considered by researchers to be crucial when measuring global and abstract variables, such as well-being (Fiske, 1982, after: Disabato et al., 2016). However, all of them were implemented within the Anglo-American cultural circle, which, in view of the confirmed relationship between the sense of well-being and cultural factors (e.g. Diener, Biswas-Diener, 2010), becomes a significant limitation in formulating more general conclusions.

The answer to these doubts and far beyond them, is the study of Disabato and colleagues (2016). It is replicative in relation to the ones discussed above, but it extends the criterion of discriminatory validity by the correlation of two types of well-being with separate psychological variables. Importantly, it was conducted with the participation of several thousand people from several cultural circles, thus constituting an important voice in the discussion on the cultural universality of the demonstrated relationships. The survey involved 7,617 people representing

the United States, Eastern, Western and Central Europe, Latin America, East and South Asia, and Australia and Oceania – a total of 109 countries. Researchers, using structural equation modeling, built two alternative models and decided to check which one has better parameters. The first model contained one overriding factor of well-being, which consisted of sub-factors, represented by successive variables relating to hedonistic and eudaimonistic well-being. The second model contained two superior factors shaped separately by variables representing hedonistic and eudaimonistic well-being. The results of confirmatory factor analyses showed that both models fit the empirical data to a good and comparable degree. In addition, both types of well-being showed very similar relationships with the correlates known from the results of previous studies (including orientation to seeking pleasure or gratitude). Moreover, the value of the correlation coefficient between latent variables for hedonistic and eudaimonistic well-being was very high and amounted to  $r = .96$ . The obtained pattern of results was replicated for all regions of the world.

The results of many studies also indicate that the variables characteristic of both approaches to well-being are significantly related to each other. For example, Sheldon and Niemiec (2006) showed that a sense of autonomy is associated with greater life satisfaction, while Kahana et al. (2013) showed that altruism strongly correlates with experiencing positive affect. The state of flow coexists with the experience of positive emotions (Rogatko, 2009), and these, in turn, predispose to more frequent perception of meaning and sense in life (King et al., 2006).

Diener, Sapyta and Suh (1998) point out that the group of people whose opinions we refer to when defining happiness, i.e. philosophers, psychologists and representatives of other disciplines, should be joined by those who are the main subject of empirical efforts of researchers – people who relate in a certain way to their lives and sense of happiness. Therefore, in the context of the discussed problem, it is also worth referring to the results of research in which participants were asked what, in their opinion, constitutes happiness. For example, in the research of Czapiński and Panek (2015), people were asked to respond to statements aimed at distinguishing supporters of hedonism and eudaimonism. It turned out that declared hedonists, i.e. people who considered pleasure and abundance as more important in life, constituted 21.2% of the sample, while declared eudaimonists, i.e. people who chose sense of meaning as more important in life, represented 40.7% of the sample. Nearly 40% of people, when defining the factors that constitute their happiness, referred to both hedonistic and eudaimonistic categories. This result prompts reflection on the need to redefine human well-being, so that the way of understanding it, which is the starting point for research on its determinants, consequences, etc., is not suspended in a theoretical vacuum.

The position that the hedonistic and eudaimonistic approaches in defining psychological well-being complement each other is directly expressed not only by psychologists representing the Polish scientific community, such as Czapiński (2015) or Trzebińska (2008), but also by foreign researchers, including Ryan and

Deci (2001) and Kashdan, Biswas-Diener and King (2008). However, it should be clearly emphasized that researchers take the initiative to integrate both approaches, not unify them. An important voice in this discussion is taken by Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff (2002), whose study showed that a model that includes two correlated factors: subjective well-being and psychological well-being, corresponds to the empirical data to a greater extent, not only in comparison to a model that includes two orthogonal factors, but also with that which consists of one superior factor. The division between hedonistic and eudaimonistic approaches has its roots in philosophy and a rich history of research that should not be ignored. It should also be borne in mind that not every experience of pleasure promotes eudaimonistic well-being, just as not every effort made for personal development will be associated with pleasure (Ryan, Deci, 2001). The hedonistic current and the eudaimonistic current are not identical, but they complement each other, and only their synthesis allows us to fully understand the multifaceted picture of human mental well-being.

### **Selected models integrating hedonistic and eudaimonistic approaches to well-being**

Research indicating the need to integrate the hedonistic and eudaimonistic trends in defining well-being have challenged previously formulated psychological theories and raised new questions about the very essence of the construct. As a consequence, new theoretical models were created, which are a proposal for a synthesis of both research traditions.

An example of a theory that combines these two perspectives is the concept of self-determination by Ryan and Deci (2019). According to the basic assumption of the authors, the achievement of well-being is possible thanks to the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: the need for relationships, competence and autonomy. These needs are universal, although they can be valued differently both by the individuals themselves and the environment in which they function. This leads to differences in the intensity of motivation to satisfy them on the intrapsychic and interindividual level. All activities undertaken by an individual are aimed at satisfying these needs and are determined by these needs.

In the concept of Ryan and Deci, psychological well-being is presented in both hedonistic and eudaimonistic terms. Positive and negative affects are taken into account, but variables such as self-actualization and vitality are also involved (Ryan, Deci, 2001, 2019). Czapiński (2015) includes the theory of self-determination among those that integrate both perspectives, however, he points out that the authors adopt a hedonistic measure of well-being to a greater extent, which may or may not be favored by certain eudaimonistic categories. Similarly, Kashdan, Biswas-Diener and King (2008) point out that positive affect in Ryan and Deci's research is treated rather as a by-product of eudaimonistic tendencies.

The concept of well-being in which these accents are distributed inversely, i.e. the eudaimonistic aspect is dominant, supplemented by the hedonic component, is the theory proposed by Seligman (2005, cited in: Kaczmarek, 2016). The author, initially associated only with the eudaimonistic trend, in the following years of his scientific work developed the theory of authentic happiness, the achievement of which is related to the experience of three components: 1) pleasure and positive emotions; 2) commitment (state of flow); 3) a sense of meaning. Justifying the need to integrate the theoretical perspectives dominant in the field of well-being, he emphasized the informative significance of the sense of subjective human well-being. He pointed out that sometimes a negative affective balance or low life satisfaction may have real grounds and be a mechanism motivating an individual to make the necessary changes in those areas of life that cause discomfort. Therefore, automatic interventions aimed at improving hedonic well-being carry the risk of creating an apparent and fragile sense of happiness. Therefore, achieving authentic happiness and a full life is possible only through the integration of a pleasant life, a good life and a meaningful life. In 2011, Seligman developed his theory and included two additional elements of happiness. These are: social relations – understood as having close relationships with others and the feeling that we are important to them; and achievements – recognized as the effort made by the entity to achieve its important goals. By including the second element, the author strengthened the eudaimonistic dimension of his concept. Taking into account the importance of interpersonal relations, he also extended it to the social dimension of well-being, which was basically absent in the previous conceptualizations of this concept. Seligman's model is referred to as The Well-Being Theory or the PERMA Model, which is an acronym formed from English words describing its components: 1) positive emotions; 2) engagement; 3) relationships; 4) meaning; 5) achievements. Similarly to Ryan and Deci's (2019) theory of self-determination, Seligman's model is a relatively new proposition that combines hedonistic and eudaimonistic categories in understanding well-being. However, it is difficult to agree with the fact that the structure of well-being included in these theories covers both of these perspectives in an equivalent way, which would most accurately correspond to the research results presented in the previous sub-chapter.

The concept in which the proposed structure of psychological well-being seems to be more consistent with them is the theory proposed by Keyes and Lopez (2002). According to its assumptions, well-being refers to the individual perception and assessment of one's life in three equally important categories: emotional experiences, psychological functioning and social functioning. First, the authors referred to Diener's (1984) three-factor model of subjective well-being and assumed that the assessment of happiness should take into account the intensity of positive and negative affect, as well as the assessment of life satisfaction in the cognitive dimension. They also included the components of psychological well-being distinguished by Ryff (1989) into their model. Finally, the concept of well-being also included satisfaction with social life.



The concept of social well-being was introduced by Keyes (1998). The author assumed that the functioning of every human includes two spheres: the private and the one he calls public, related to functioning in a peer group, in the work environment or in the broadly understood society. Previous theories focused on the first area of life, ignoring the fact that people are embedded in certain social structures and are part of different communities, and how they deal with challenges in this area is important for the global assessment of well-being. Keyes, referring to sociological concepts focused on the issue of social health, including the theories of Durkheim, Marx and Seeman (Keyes, 1998, 2005), developed a model of social well-being, which consists of: (1) Social integration – concerns the sense of belonging to society. It is related to the conviction of a person that they are part of a community, that they receive support from it and that they have much in common with other people who constitute this community. (2) Social acceptance – is a generalized attitude towards other people. It means the belief that people are generally good and capable of kindness. (3) Social contribution – includes the belief that one is an important member of a social group and that one has something important to offer it. (4) Social updating – includes an assessment of society's potential and trajectory of development. Associated with the feeling that society is constantly developing and its potential is realized by citizens and institutions established for this purpose. (5) Social coherence – refers to the belief that the way society works is understandable, logical and predictable.

Social well-being has been incorporated into Keyes and Lopez's (2002) model of global well-being. Finally, the model takes into account the following three categories:

1. Emotional well-being – defined by: life satisfaction and balance in experiencing positive and negative affect.
2. Psychological well-being – defined by: self-acceptance, positive relationships, personal development, life purpose, control over the environment and autonomy.
3. Social well-being – defined by: social inclusion, social acceptance, social contribution and social updating and coherence.

The three-factor structure of psychological well-being was approved by confirmatory factor analysis (Keyes, 2005). The results showed that a model that included three equal factors relating to emotional, psychological and social well-being was the best fit to the empirical data. It obtained better model fit measures than the one that included only two factors: emotional well-being as a hedonic factor and combined psychological and social well-being as a eudaimonistic factor. Even weaker than the two-factor model was the one-factor model, in which the global level of well-being was the superior factor, and individual sub-scales from three dimensions were the subordinate factors. This means that the assumptions resulting from the theoretical model adopted by Keyes and Lopez seem to be accurate. It is justified not only to distinguish the hedonistic and eudaimonistic trends in research on mental

well-being, but also to enrich this picture with a new area – human functioning in the social environment. The three-factor structure of psychological well-being has been confirmed in many other studies carried out in various cultural contexts, including the United States (Gallagher, Lopez, Preacher, 2009; Robitschek, Keyes, 2009), in South Korea, Australia and Africa (Keyes, 2013), as well as in 23 European countries (Karaś, Ciecuch, 2014), including Poland (Karaś, Ciecuch, Keyes, 2014).

## Summary and conclusions

Researchers dealing with the issue of mental well-being largely refer to one of two ways of conceptualizing it. The first is the hedonistic approach represented by the model of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984), and the second is the eudaimonic approach with the most common concept of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989). The aim of this article is to stimulate scientific reflection on the legitimacy of distinguishing two separate areas, so clearly marked in the literature, constituting the general sense of human well-being. The cited publications seem to unambiguously resolve this doubt, indicating that the synthesis of both approaches not only best corresponds to the results of empirical research, but also gives a chance to respond to the real needs of their real recipients to a greater extent, while not omitting those people whose beliefs about happiness are more explicitly targeted. The presentation of selected models that synthesize both approaches – relatively new, not very popular, and at the same time well-grounded empirically – is a proposal for researchers who undertake the issue of well-being in their scientific work to consider such a conceptualization of this construct that, without negating the hitherto scientific achievements in this field of psychology research, introduces a new quality in the way of understanding it. The hedonistic and eudaimonic approaches to well-being, overlapping to some extent, ask different questions about the nature of human happiness, and thus are complementary to each other. Their congruence provides an opportunity to capture a vast picture of the good life. Recognition of this multifaceted mental well-being is a promising perspective for the development of more and more accurate research on this construct.

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DOBROSTAN HEDONISTYCZNY I EUDAJMONISTYCZNY:  
INTEGRACJA UJĘĆ JAKO KIERUNEK DALSZYCH BADAŃ

**Streszczenie.** W literaturze dotyczącej dobrostanu psychicznego wyraźny jest podział na definiowanie tego pojęcia w nurcie hedonistycznym (jako wysokie nasilenie pozytywnego afektu, niskie nasilenie afektu negatywnego oraz satysfakcja z życia) oraz eudajmonistycznym (jako samoakceptacja, pozytywne relacje z innymi, poczucie sensu i celu w życiu). Tymczasem badania empiryczne podejmujące problematykę zbieżności obu perspektyw wskazują, że najbardziej trafnym sposobem konceptualizacji tego konstruktu jest ich integracja. W niniejszym artykule przedstawione zostaną najważniejsze doniesienia z tego zakresu, a także modele teoretyczne dobrostanu psychicznego, które stanowią propozycję syntezy kategorii hedonistycznych oraz eudajmonistycznych. W dyskusji omówiono zalety szerokiej konceptualizacji dobrostanu dla trafności badań psychologicznych prowadzonych w tym obszarze.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dobrostan, szczęście, hedonizm, eudajmonia

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