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Research Article

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Personality traits, creativity and sense of humor styles in predicting the subjective wellbeing of the athletes

Leaila Noorafshan¹, Farshad Fazli²

1- PhD Scholar of training and educational philosophy, Farhangian University,
*Email: Inoorafshan@yahoo.com,
TEL:09177178050
2- Farshad Fazli, Electrical Engineering
*Email: Farshadfazli752@yahoo.com

Tel:09177178050

ABSTRACT

Subjective wellbeing is comprised of three components, namely life satisfaction, negative affect and positive affect. In other words, wellbeing is the feeling of solidarity and cohesion in life and it includes a general satisfaction of the life and the objective of the present study is the determination of the relationship between the personality characteristics predictor variables, sense of humor styles and creativity with the mental wellbeing. The present study makes use of a descriptive method of the correlation type. The study sample volume includes 300 athletes from the sport clubs in the city of Shiraz all of whom have been selected based on a multistep randomized method from the various sport clubs active in the city of Shiraz, and it is worth mentioning that the study sample volume was consisted of 150 girls and 150 boys. The study instruments were NEO personality characteristics questionnaire, humor styles questionnaire designed by Martin et al, Diener's subjective wellbeing scale and Abedi's creativity questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between the personality characteristics, neuroticism, extroversion, openness and conscientiousness and subjective wellbeing in the athletes. But no significant relationship was found between the personality characteristic of agreeableness and the subjective wellbeing. Also, it is noteworthy that from the fourfold creativity aspect only fluency and elaboration showed a significant relationship with the subjective wellbeing. But, flexibility and originality were not found to be in a significant association with the subjective wellbeing in the athletes and finally it was shown that among the humor styles, the self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating styles were in a significant relationship with the subjective well-being. Additionally, no significant relationship was figured out between the affiliative style and the subjective wellbeing. The results of the regression analysis indicated that the multifaceted relationship between the various types of the personality characteristics, humor styles and the creativity aspects with the subjective wellbeing is statistically significant. The predictor variables afforded to account for 59% of the criterion variable's variations. **Keywords**: personality characteristics, humor styles, creativity, subjective wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

During the recent decades, with the emergence of a new area in the psychology called positive psychology the psychological researches have undergone extensive changes. This new branch of psychology is essentially based on the understanding and the elaboration of living a happy life, subjective wellbeing and the prediction of the factors effective thereon (Seligman and Csikszent Mihalyi, 2000). Subjective wellbeing is identified as a feeling of cohesion and continuity in life, affective balance and a general satisfaction of the life (Langer, 2002). Subjective wellbeing is

consisted of three components which are satisfaction with life, negative affections and positive affections. The main and cognitive component of the subjective wellbeing is the satisfaction with life which is defined as the individual's cognitive evaluation of one's life (Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003). Diener et al (2003) believe that it should be emphasized in the subjective wellbeing on the individual's judgment regarding how and to what extent the individual feels satisfied with his or her current status of life. Positive psychological functioning means that the individual is capable of creating or preserving an optimum level of subjective wellbeing. There are numerous studies conducted on what makes an individual happy in order to reach to a perfect description of the subjective wellbeing, the reasons contributing to subjective wellbeing and its associations (Diener, Sah, Lucas and Smith, 1999).

A comprehensive meta-analysis which has been undertaken by De Neve and Cooper (1998) and Steel, Schmidt and Schultz (2008) indicate that the personality traits, especially neuroticism and extraversion are the major determinants of the subjective wellbeing. Costa and McCrae (1980) found out that extraversion is positively and relatively strongly associated with positive affection and subjective wellbeing. Based on a report presented by Francis (1999) there is a positive relationship between the extraversion and wellbeing and there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and wellbeing. Also, according to the ideas and notions proposed by Hills and Argyle (2001) there is a positive and significant relationship between the extraversion and well-being. In some of the researchers' opinions, emotional stability and extraversion form the basic biological foundation of the wellbeing and the agreeableness and dutifulness provide for the grounding in which the social and environmental indicators of the wellbeing can emerge (Carver and Scheier, 2004; Furnham and Chang, 1997). However, inheritance characteristics are only expressive of a group of the subjective wellbeing determinants and the other group of the subjective wellbeing determinants includes the situational variables such as creativity, humor styles and goals (Gomez, Allemand and Grob, 2012). Based on the same idea, Sheldon and Hoon (2007) focused on the various factors as the subjective wellbeing determinants to gain a full conception of its contributing factors and the other factors associated therewith. From the theoretical points of view, the multifaceted nature of the subjective wellbeing is jointly determined by the inheritance and the multiple situational factors (Kahnemann, Diener and Schwarz, 1999; mroczek and Little, 2006).

From a theoretical perspective, neuroticism and extraversion are but two of the subjective wellbeing determinants as a result of their affective nature. Negative emotionality of the neuroticism and positive emotionality of the extraversion are strongly associated with the positive affections and negative subjective wellbeing (Yik and Russel, 2001). From an empirical point of view, there are abundant evidences indicating the existence f a strong relationship between neuroticism, extraversion and subjective well-being (Costa and McCrae, 1980; Lucas and Fujita, 2000; Pavot, Diener and Fujita, 1990; Vitterso, 2001; Vitterso and Nilsen, 2002; all as quoted from Gomez et al, 2012). Meta-analysis also confirms the relationship between these two personality traits and the subjective wellbeing (De Neve and Cooper, 1998; Steel et al, 2008). But, from an experimental perspective, spending effort to comprehend the various factors as the subjective wellbeing determinants has been relatively scanty and therefore there cannot be offered a clear-cut growth perspective (Gomez, Allemand and Grob, 2012). There are numerous evidences and documents which signify the strong relationship between the personality traits and the subjective wellbeing. Both from the theoretical and the experimental perspectives, neuroticism and extraversion are usually taken into consideration as two personality attributes which are effective on the subjective wellbeing prediction.

Another variable which is of a great association with the subjective wellbeing is the sense of humor. A great many of the theories underline the useful role of the sense of humor in the physical and mental health and in the physical and subjective wellbeing as well (Dickson, 1980; Martin and Lefcourt, 1983; Nezu, Nezu and Blissett, 1988; all as quoted from Pooladi and Golestaneh, 2008). The results of the various studies are indicative of the positive but faint relationship between the sense of humor and physical and mental health. In the best case, sense of humor only accounts for 6% of the mental health variations. According to Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray and Weir (2003), the reason behind such a weak relation is the sense of humor assessment. That is because the previous tools used in measuring sense of humor evaluated it in a general and unidimensional manner. Martin suggested several styles of negative and positive sense of humor in lieu of just one specific type of positive humor. Martin (1998; Martin et al, 2003) introduced four humor styles of affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating. The results related to the humor styles signify that in most of the cases the affiliative and the self-enhancing humor styles are positively associated with the mental health, subjective wellbeing, emotional intelligence components, social adequacy and academic achievement. In contrast, the aggressive and self-defeating humor styles are negatively associated with the

above-mentioned components and they are also found positively correlated with depression and hostility (Martin et al, 2003; Yip and Martin, 2006; Greven, Chamorro-Premuzik, Arteche and Furnham, 2008).

Another significant construct investigated in the present study was creativity. From the perspective of the humanism, creativity not only includes the gains, rather it encompasses the activities, processes and the attitudes. The humanists put a particular emphasis on the relationship between the creativity and the mental health and self-development. Rogers believes that the main motivations in creativity are the individual's inclination towards actualizing one's own self, being attracted to growth and maturity, having tendencies towards revealing and making a practical use of one's own capabilities and the creative individual is the one whose potential talent of being human is perfect (Sohrabi, 2003). Thus, in the present study, the main objective pursued by the author is the survey of the preceding role of the personality traits variables, humor styles and creativity in the subjective wellbeing of the athletes.

Materials and Methods

a) Study population and sampling method:

The study population of the present study includes all of the athletes from sport clubs in the city of Shiraz out of whom 300 individuals, 150 girls and 150 boys, were selected based on a multistep randomized sampling method.

b) Study instrument:

a. NEO Five Factor Inventory (FFI) personality test:

The questionnaire was firstly prepared by Costa and McCrae in 1985 and it was made known as NEO containing 185 questions. Afterwards, based on the same questionnaire, the 240-question and 60-question forms were constructed by the same researchers (Pytlik, 2002). In the present study, there is made use of NEO test containing 60 questions which assess five factors of neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C). NEO questionnaire has been constructed to obtain a brief and useful rate regarding the five fundamental factors mentioned above.

The test was validated by Kiyamehr (2002) in the university students from Tehran universities. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for five factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness were 0.86, 0.80, 0.75, 0.69 and 0.79, respectively. After normalizing the test in the humanities students from Tehran University, Kiyamehr (2002) obtained the reliability coefficients of the test by taking advantage of the retest method (retesting 336 individuals) for five factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness as 0.84, 0.82, 0.78, 0.65 and 0.86, respectively and the Cronbach's alpha obtained for the aforesaid factors were reported as 0.79, 0.73, 0.42, 0.58 and 0.77, respectively. McCrae and Costa (2004) reported the correlation coefficients for the 240-question NEO test for the five factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness as 0.83, 0.83, 0.91, 0.76 and 0.86, respectively. Kiyamehr (2002) reported the correlation coefficient for the 240-question NEO test for the five factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness as 0.75, 0.91, 0.71, 0.78 and 0.75.

b. Humor style questionnaire:

Humor style questionnaire was constructed by Martin et al (2003). The questionnaire contained 32 seven-scale questions which were rated from "completely agree" to "completely disagree". The four subscales of the test evaluate four humor styles: self-enhancing styles, affiliative styles, aggressive styles and self-defeating styles. Martin et al (2003) calculated the questionnaire's reliability through taking advantage of two methods, namely Cronbach's alpha method and retest method. The reliability coefficients based on the Cronbach's alpha method for the self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive and self-defeating styles were 0.81, 0.80, 0.77 and 0.80, respectively. The reliability coefficient based on the retest method for the self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive and self-defeating styles were 0.81, 0.85, 0.80 and 0.82, respectively.

The questionnaire validity was computed via the situational humor questionnaire correlation tests which were reported as 0.43, 0.27, 0.12 and 0.01 for self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive and self-defeating styles,

respectively and it was found out that there is a significant relationship regarding the positive aspects of sense of humor in a P<0.01 level, but no significant relationship was obtained in terms of the negative aspects of the sense of humor. Also, the humoristic coping style coefficients were 0.53, 0.27, -0.28 and -0.26 for self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive and self-defeating styles, respectively all of which were found statistically significant in P<0.01 level and the liveliness mood questionnaire also indicated coefficients equal to 0.55, 0.65, 0.05 and 0.09 for self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive and self-defeating styles, respectively, and it was also shown that there is a significant relationship between the positive aspects of the sense of humor in P<0.01 level. But, no significant relationship was found between the negative aspects of the sense of humor. In sum, the sense of humor measurement instrument is in an appropriate level in terms of the validity and reliability.

c. Abedi's creativity questionnaire:

Abedi (1999) constructed a 60-question questionnaire for measuring the creativity based on the definition put forth by Torrance (1974). The questions assess four components of creativity which are fluency: questions 1 to 16, originality: questions 17 to 38, flexibility: questions 39 to 49 and elaboration: questions 50 to 60. Each question presents three choices which are scored in a range from 1 to 3 indicative of a low to high level of creativity. He revised the tests many times and the current questionnaire form has been constructed by him assisted by the Californian professors.

d. Subjective wellbeing questionnaire:

Diener et al (1985) developed the five-factor scale of the satisfaction with life to measure the cognitive aspect of the individuals' subjective wellbeing. The participants provide their responses to each item of the questionnaire which will be scores based on Likert's 5-point scale (from 1, indicating completely disagree, to 5, indicating completely agree). The findings of the studies performed by Diener et al (1985) supported the SWLS unidimensional structure. In the study conducted by Shahni etla (2012), the confirmatory factor analysis method was used to evaluate the scale's validity. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis were found affirmative of the unidimensional structure thereof.

In the study performed by Yusefi, E'etemadi, Bahrami, Beshlideh and Shirbegi (2010), the scale's reliability was obtained as 0.86 by taking advantage of the Cronbach's alpha method. In the study conducted by Mozaffari (as quoted from Yusefi et al, 2010) the reliability of the test was calculated according to Cronbach's alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained; furthermore, the reliability coefficient was also calculated by means of retest method and a value f 0.82 was reported.

Findings

The study findings are provided here in two parts, one descriptive part and one part pertaining to the study hypotheses. Table (1) presents the mean, standard deviation and variables minimum and maximum values.

Tables, figures and diagrams:

Table 1: mean, standard deviation, and variables minimum and maximum values

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum score	Maximum score	Total number
Neuroticism	29.33	4.39	24	49	200
Extraversion	37.43	4.9	27	52	200
Openness	35.42	5.62	23	54	200
Agreeableness	40.03	5.3	26	54	200
Conscientiousness	19.20	2.95	10	25	200
Wellbeing	11.90	3.39	5	19	200
Originality	35.13	5.33	19	47	200
Fluency	44.19	6.83	26	60	200
Flexibility	23.62	4.43	13	32	200
Creativity	124.81	18.18	79	164	200

Affiliative sense of humor	20.59	4.45	12	31	200
Self-enhancing sense of humor	23.05	3.87	12	30	200
Aggressive sense of humor	23.74	3.51	17	32	200
Self-defeating sense of humor	26.01	5.47	16	36	200

a) Findings related to the study hypotheses:

To investigate the study hypotheses there is made use of Pierson correlation coefficient and regression analysis.

Table 2: correlation coefficients between the study variables

Varia ble	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
2	- 0.0 7													
3	0.2 0*	0.41	1											
4	- 0.1 6*	0.20	0.36	1										
5	0.0 5	0.35	0.13	0.37 **	1									
6	0.2 1*	0.53	0.33	0.14	0.50 **	1								
7	0.2 2*	0.05	0.20	0.18	0.14	0.19	1							
8	- 0.1 6	0.25	0.02	0.02	0.33	0.37	0.77 **	1						
9	0.1 2	0.26	0.02	0.06	0.26	0.45 **	0.66 **	0.80	1					
10	0.2 1*	0.24	0.08	0.14	0.20	0.11	0.72	0.69	0.53	1				
11	0.2 0*	0.22	0.08	0.09	0.27	0.32	0.90 **	0.94 **	0.83	0.82	1			
12	0.1 3	0.13	0.07	0.21	0.10	0.16	0.45	0.50	0.41	0.49	0.53	1		
13	0.0 1	0.20	0.13	0.31	0.04	0.34	0.25	0.26 **	0.35	0.28	0.31	0.1 7*	1	
14	0.0 6	-0.12	-0.09	-0.12	- 0.19 *	0.23	-0.06	- 0.19 *	0.22	0.02	-0.14	- 0.1 6*	-0.06	1
15 **P<01	0.1	0.02 *P<0	-0.07	-0.14	-0.07	0.20 *	-0.06	-0.08	0.29 **	0.08	0.05	0.0 5	- 0.38 **	0.50

1-neuroticism, 2-extraversion, 3-openness, 4-agreeableness, 5-conscientiousness, 6-wellbeing, 7-originality, 8-fluency, 9-elaboration, 10-flexibility, 11-originality, 12-affiliative sense of humor, 13-self-enhancing sense of humor, 14-aggressive sense of humor, 15-self-defeating sense of humor

As it is evident from table (2), the correlation coefficients between neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness and subjective wellbeing are -0.21, 0.53, 0.33, 0.14 and 0.50, respectively. Also, the correlation coefficients between the various aspects of the creativity namely the originality, fluency, elaboration and flexibility with subjective wellbeing are 0.19, 0.37, 0.45 and 0.11, respectively. Finally, the correlation coefficients between the various humor styles, namely the affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and the self-defeating styles with the subjective wellbeing are 0.16, 0.34, -0.23 and -0.20, respectively.

Table 3: regression analysis based on a hierarchical method between the predictor variables and the subjective wellbeing

Criteri			\mathbb{R}^2	F(p)	Regression coefficients							
on variabl e	Predictor Variable	M R			Extraver sion	Conscientiou sness	Elabora tion	Neurotic ism	Flexibi lity	Sense s of hum or		
Subject ive wellbei ng	Extraversion	0.5	0.2	38.3 3 (0.00 1)	β=0.53 t=6.19 p<0.001							
	Conscientiou sness	0.6	0.3	31.7 9 (0.00 1)	β=0.40 t=4.7 p<0.001	β=0.36 t=4.2 p<0.001						
	Elaboration	0.6	0.4 6	27.9 7 (0.00 1)	β=0.34 t=4.20 p<0.001	β=0.30 t=3.70 p<0.001	β=0.28 t=3.5 p<0.001					
	Neuroticism	0.7	0.5	25.8 9 (0.00 1)	β=0.31 t=4.07 p<0.001	β=0.0.32 t=4.1 p<0.001	β=0.31 t=4.14 p<0.001	β=0.23 t=3.30 p<0.001				
	Flexibility	0.7 4	0.5	23.3 1 (0.00 1)	β=0.34 t=4.49 p<0.001	β=0.32 t=4.34 p<0.001	β=0.41 t=4.98 p<0.001	β=0.20 t=2.8 p<0.001	β=0.21 t=2.59 p<0.00			
	Self- enhancing humor style	0.7	0.5	22.6 8 (0.00 1)	β=0.31 t=4.27 p<0.001	β=0.34 t=4.7 p<0.001	β=0.35 t=4.29 p<0.001	β=0.19 t=2.87 p<0.001	β=0.24 t=3.02 p<0.00	β=0.2 1 t=3.0 1 p<0.0 01		

As it is observed in table (3), the regression analysis results indicate that the multiple correlation between the predictor variable and criterion variable is MR=0.77, $R^2=0.59$ and F=22.58 which is found statistically significant in P<0.001 significance level. Therefore the linear combination of the predictor variables with the criterion variables is statistically significant. The best predictor variables were extraversion, conscientiousness, elaboration, neuroticism, flexibility and self-enhancing sense of humor, respectively. It is noteworthy that there are some variables missing from the equation which has to be interpreted as their being of a trivial ignorable role in increasing the criterion variable variations.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study are indicative of a direct relationship between extraversion, conscientiousness and openness with the subjective wellbeing. Also, an inverse relationship exists between neuroticism and subjective wellbeing, but no relationship was found between the agreeableness and subjective wellbeing. The results obtained herein are

corresponding to the results obtained in the studies conducted by Gomez et al (2012), Steel et al (2008) and DeNeve and Cooper (1998).

In elucidating the aforementioned findings it can be stated that neuroticism includes numerous affective problems such as fear, hostility and depression. Such problems and disorders can weaken the individuals' positive beliefs and consequently neutralize the grounding on which the individuals' happiness would emerge. In this way, the negative affections play an inhibitory role and act as a barrier to the feeling of wellbeing, sociability, sublime human relations and even getting successful in cultural and educational andfamilial issues (Seligman, 2002). Ryan and Dessi (2001, as quoted from Spanger and Palorca, 2004) believe that everyone is seeking to find and get to comfort and tries to stay away from pain and agony. Therefore, wellbeing stays against neuroticism and the presence of the one should be regarded as the other one's deficiency. In fact, it sometimes seems that these two modes are the two opposite poles of the affections continuum forming the individual's behavior through exerting their own unique attributes.

On the other hand, extraversion is very closely associated with motility and relatedness and thus it can lead to acceptability, sociality and audience-orientation. Extraversion is in a close relationship with positive affections and being skilful in producing prosperous situations. Also, it is associated and closely related to being innovative and daring to enter the groups and being sociable. Each of the aforesaid indicators can be highly effective on the creation of wellbeing. Argyle and Lu (1990) have been able to analyze extraversion in respect to happiness and welfare and they have come to the understanding that the main reason behind extraversion is wellbeing, a feeling of happiness, prosperity, enjoyment and taking the most out of the life opportunities. Additionally, conscientiousness includes a sense of duty, responsibility and precise, organized and fair accomplishment of the jobs. Such features can guide the individual's personality towards higher and more wellbeing. Wellbeing bears the meaning of satisfaction with one's life. Such a feeling of satisfaction can result from precise and organized fulfillment of one's responsibilities and jobs which will be subsequently followed by a feeling of efficiency and more satisfaction in the individual.

The findings of the present study are suggestive of a direct relationship between the positive humor styles (affiliative and self-enhancing) and an inverse relationship between the negative humor styles (aggressive and self-defeating) with subjective wellbeing. This latter finding is consistent with the results obtained in the studies performed by Martin et al (2003) and Greven et al (2008). In confirming this finding it is worth mentioning that self-enhancing humor style incorporates a generally humoristic perspective to life, tendency to make use of humor in coping with the life inconveniences and adopting a humoristic approach to stressful or disastrous situations (Martin et al, 2003). In such types of humoring the gagger tries to develop his or her situation without attempting to humiliate the others. In fact the individuals who make use of self-enhancing humor style apply it as a coping skill. Being equipped with such type of coping skill helps the individuals experience more of the positive subjective wellbeing components.

In affiliative humor style the individuals try to sprinkle the relations with happiness via telling jokes or doing things of the like without offending the others. Affiliative humor style results in social relationships with the least conflict possible. Such a type of humor style increases wellbeing, reduces conflicts, and establishes a strong relationship between the individuals and enhances the individual's attractiveness for the others. To put it differently, such a type of sense of humor causes an increase in association and corroborates group identity, creates a pleasurable atmosphere and strengthens the group norms (martin et al, 2003). In aggressive sense of humor, the individual makes the other individuals laugh and tries to provide for a happy situation for oneself and the others even at the cost of humiliating another person. The individuals with aggressive humor style experience a higher level of anxiety, stress and depression. Thus, it seems that such individuals although become able to express their negative emotions in an indirect way through aggressive humor style they would not be filled with a positive feeling from making such aggressive jokes in the end. In self-defeating humor style, in fact the individual resorts to a defensive denial and tends to make use of the humoristic behaviors to conceal his or her underlying negative emotions, better described as useful avoidance. Such a type of making use of sense of humor lowers the individual's self-esteem in the long-term and consequently decreases the individual's satisfaction with life. Also, it seems that self-defeating sense of humor would not be even getting to its final long-range goal which is attracting the others' attention and establishing positive relationships with the others.

Also, various aspects of creativity, namely originality, elaboration and fluency are associated with wellbeing. This finding is consistent with the results obtained in the study undertaken by Sohrabi (2003). In elaborating on this latter

finding it can be said that the individuals use brainstorming in creativity, express their ideas freely, look at the phenomena from different angles and try to change the environment and atmosphere. It appears that such components lead to the increase in the individual's mental health and consequently the satisfaction with life and subjective wellbeing.

The results of the regression analysis are more striking. Among all of the predictor variables, the best predictor variables were extraversion, conscientiousness, elaboration, neuroticism, flexibility and self-enhancing sense of humor, respectively. Such a finding complies with the results obtained in the studies carried out by Gomez et al (2012), Steel et al (2008), DeNeve and Cooper (1998) and Seligman (2002). In explaining the finding it is noteworthy that the intrinsic preparations and the inheritance features including the personality traits and particularly extraversion are significant predictors of the subjective wellbeing. The extroverts usually like social interactions, they have mutual relationships with many other individuals, develop their social skills and more importantly they live at the present time. Therefore, such characteristics help the individuals to feel happy and satisfied with their lives, have positive affections towards life and generally enjoy a higher level of subjective wellbeing. On the other hand, some variables such as fluency and self-enhancing sense of humor which are enumerated as the environmental and situational variables are predictors of the subjective wellbeing, as well. This is reflective of the idea that the more the individuals enjoy a more fluent and fluid thoughts and the more freely they express their ideas and notions and the less they are afraid of being evaluated by the others, they will enjoy a higher level of subjective wellbeing. In addition, the individuals with self-enhancing sense of humor are more willing to make the others happy without humiliating a single person in their various interactions. Thus, such a skill help the individual acquire peace in the mind from the various situations and enhance his or her wellbeing.

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