NEW APPROACHES IN SOCIAL WELL- BEING STUDIES

Victoria Dunaeva
Activus Aspectus. Innovative Laboratory, Warsaw, Poland
www.activus-aspectus.eu
vdunaeva@yahoo.com

Abstract

In last decades it is possible to observe popularity the concept of well-being, which present meaningful and satisfied life for personality, special kind of attitude (to oneself and environment). Well-being is often associated with physical vitality, mental activity, social support and satisfaction, self-realization both in personal and professional fields. It is considered as an alternative of negative way of thinking, destructive defensive mechanisms and inappropriate style of living. Social well-being as significant part of well-being is connected with our relations with others and our feeling of security related to the environment we live in. In my presentation I would like to present new contemporary approaches in studies of social well-being. It is most related to the quality of our existence on social level, our capacity to find out own place in the environment independently of economic and social factors.

Keywords

Well-being, Social Well-being, Happiness, Attachment, Relations

1. Introduction

According to Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, well-being is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person.

From the psychological point of view, well-being is the subjective evaluation of life through satisfaction and affect. It refers to the absence of negative feeling and conditions, a sense of accomplishment and personal fulfilment.

Psychological well-being's studies are focused mostly in the personal development of individuals, their style to face life challenges, their efforts and desires to achieve task and feel satisfied. (Ryff, 2014)

Martin Seligman, an American psychologist, founder of positive psychology elaborated the "Well-being Theory" that emphasizes the goal of reaching well-being. He defines five factors of well-being: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment (PERMA model) (Seligman, 2011).

However, there are a number of other studies emphasizing that well-being depends upon congruence between personal values and the prevailing value environment.

Carol Ryff elaborated multidimensional model of well-being which is based on six factors: personal growth, self-esteem, autonomy, purpose in life, positive relationships with others and good adjustment to the environment (Ryff, 2014). In turn, Corey Keyes (Keys, 2003), noted that well-being has three components: emotional or subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. Profesor Bruni Luigino in the book "A Lexicon of Social Well-Being" covers many issues which may influence on understanding how to live well in the contemporary world. He pays special attention to social education, professional learning, notion of soft power and freedom of choice (Luigino, 2015). According to Olusegun Adedamola Mayungbo, personality traits may influence on life satisfaction (and thus subjective well-being) both directly and indirectly. For instance, individuals who show helping behaviour and try to cooperate with others are more involved with social activity (Mayungbo, 2016).

2. What is the difference between personal and social well-being

Some researchers on well-being (Keyes and Shapiro, 2004) emphasized the difference between personal and public life and proposed to present wellbeing as a social phenomenon, basing on the fact that life of individual is significantly shaped by social structures.

This concept was developed into term of social wellbeing in contrast to the well-being which is used mostly in the psychology and coaching. Keyes discovered the five dimensions for social well-being measures: social integration ("the evaluation of the quality of one's relationship to society and community"), social acceptance ("the construal of society through the character and qualities of other people as a generalized category"), social contribution ("The belief that one is a vital member of society, with something of value to give to the world"), social actualization ("the evaluation of the potential and trajectory of society"), and social coherence ("the perception of the quality, organization and operation of the social world, and it includes a concern for knowing about the world") (Keyes, 1998).

Keyes stressed that social well-being defined our seeking for positive social lives, involving meaningful interaction with family, community and wider society.

It is possible to say that social well-being is composed of two significant elements: social adjustment and social support. Social adjustment refers to personal satisfaction with relationships and possibility to be fulfilled with social roles. Social support means the quality of contacts in one's social network and feeling of protection related to those contacts.

It is the extent to which we feel to be belonged and to be socially included; a connected person is a supported person in society. Social well-being is expressed by our lifestyle, possibility to follow own traditions and belief in society, secure interactions with others. It is obvious that our professional development and career path, as well as creative self-realization often depend on our social contacts and networks. It should be mentioned that notion of social well-being also include equal access to and delivery of basic needs services (as water, food, shelter, health and primary education services). Therefore, social well-being can be defined as people's appraisal of their social relationships, conditions, and functioning in social community. It is individuals' perceived quality of their relationships with other people in their social networks, neighbourhoods, and communities (Keyes and Shapiro, 2004).

According to the World Health Organization, social well-being is an essential dimension of health along with physical and mental aspects. It can impact positively on the quality of life, social interactions, and social performance.

The key for measuring of social well-being is to measure internal reply to stimuli-feelings, thoughts and behaviors which show satisfaction or lack of satisfaction with the social environment'. In practice it is seldom possible to keep well-being and social well-being separate. Social health comes from regular, positive social contact with family, friends, neighbours, work, but also from self-awareness and positive self-concept.

In which condition does the problem with social well-being appear? Social well-being is closely related with personal one. A person who had an adverse childhood has very big troubles with oneself - he/she cannot reach satisfaction and self-realization both in personal life and in the profession area. The interpersonal relations of such person are influenced with negative experience - fear of be abandoned, fear of punishment, memory about aggression. It is very difficult for him/her to maintain lasting and healthy relations (without tendency for dependency and suffering).

3. The Attachment Theory

In this context it should be mentioned the theory of attachment proposed by British psychologist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby. Attachment is a deep emotional bond which

connects one person to another (Bowlby, 1990). Attachment theory is concerned with the relationships between people, especially long-term relationships, including between a parent and children and between romantic partners.

Bowlby first used this term during his studies related to the developmental psychology of children from various backgrounds. He worked as a psychiatrist in a Child Guidance Clinic in London, where he was involved with treatment of emotionally disturbed children. According to his observation, children have a universal need to find close connection with their caregiver when they feel threatened. Attachment behavior of adults in attitude to the child includes replying sensitively and appropriately to the child's needs. Attachment theory explains how the parent-child relationship influences development of personality.

Research on Bowlby's theory of attachment presented that infants placed in an unknown situation and separated from their parents will generally react in one of three ways. (Fraley, 2018):

1. Secure attachment – children experienced distress caused separation with parents, but were easily comforted when the they returned.

2. Anxious-resistant attachment – children showed bigger distress, but after reuniting with the parents, they felt both comfort and anger wanting to "punish" the parents for leaving.

3. Avoidant attachment – children didn't demonstrate stress and they rather ignored the parents after their coming back.

Contemporary psychologists are also convinced in the importance of the child's relationship with their parents in terms of their social, emotional and cognitive development and often use the attachment theory of Bowlby in analysing of problems with adjusting to environment of adults. Researchers have found that attachment patterns elaborated in childhood can lead to a number of outcomes. Children who maintained proximity to caregivers are capable to get more comfort and protection. They develop stronger self-esteem and become more independent, have good social relationships, and experience less depression and anxiety. As adults, they try to have healthy, comfortable and lasting relationships. It's easy for them to survive in adulthood.

When children didn't manage the secure attachment, they often have problems both in childhood and throughout life. Feeling of being abandoned and neglected led to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that don't allow adults to maintain effective relations, find social support if they need and generally function normally.

What does determine the successful attachment? Most of researchers suggest that nurturance and responsiveness of parents (caregivers) are the basic determinants of attachment. Primary caregivers who are responsive to children needs help them to develop a sense of

security. Children notice that the caregiver is dependable, and that becomes a secure base for them to explore surrounding and feel comfortable in the world.

Therefore, in order to understand the reasons for destructive patterns in one's life choices and difficulties with relationships, we should realize in which environment one was raised.

4. The Transgenerational Approach

There are a number of contemporary theories which contribute to understanding of personal development and adjustment to social surrounding. Among them there is Psycho-Genealogy, or transgenerational approach elaborated by French professor of psychology Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger. During her researches and practicing as a psychologist and psychotherapist she discovered that definite psychological programs could be transmitted from one generation to the next. We repeat - in unconscious way! - Many circumstances, problems with interpersonal relations, traumas belonging to other members of our clan. Sometimes, the transmission of programs can lead to health disorders and problems with professional realization that represents the expression of the emotional stress of a parent, a grandparent, who could not resolve definite conflict during their lifetime. According to Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger, the distress, which circulates within the clan often appear as unwanted behavior which led to the lack of professional satisfaction, financial problems, incapacity to maintain healthy and happy relationships (Schutzenberger, 2016). The trangenerational approach explains why we can feel excluded and isolated in social environment. What the reason that we are convinced in our misery role in our family and, therefore, in our surrounding. Why do we allow that our needs (physical and emotional ones) become "invisible" and meaningless for others? Why we cannot protect ourselves and keep boundaries?

Schutzenberger believed that the liberation, or even healing is possible through the deep awareness of unresolved emotional conflicts of others members of family. In one of her book titled « The Ancestor Syndrome», she reveals the results of her clinical studies and shows how her clients free themselves from irrational fears, psychological and physical difficulties thanks to discovering the parallels between their own life and the lives of their ancestors. Schutzenberger includes into the transgenerational approach the theory of 'invisible loyalty' owed to previous generations, which can influence many our life choices, emotional reaction, events and conditions which we accept. It often happens beyond our awareness. The main idea is based on our deep hidden wish to be a part of our family clan which we unconsciously express through repeating the stories of other members. This behavior prohibits our self-realization. Unconscious association with one of our ancestors who had a negative experience in personal relations and

social adjustment can be one of the reasons why very communicative and open person suddenly begins feeling uncomfortable and insecure in social environment.

What we perceive as coincidences, such as the repeating of disease, divorces, separations, financial bankruptcy, professional failures, are often connected with unresolved conflicts which reappear in our lives and will reappear in the lives of further generations in order to be liberated.

As a method of psychotherapy within transgenerational approach Anne Schutzenberger, proposed to explore the genealogical tree and implement so called 'genosociograms' (family trees) to illustrate all problems, conflicts and failures circulating inside family. According to her observation, client's works on family memories can facilitate self-understanding and reveal own true needs, wishes and emotions. Liberated memory can contribute to one's self-regulation.

The approach of Anne Schutzenberger can be effectively used for studies on personal and social well-being.

5. The Theory of Psychological Types

In recent year's research on communication skills (as an important condition for social well-being) has increasingly developed. Contemporary psychologists, coaches and social workers often apply to the theory of psychological types proposed by the founder of Analytical Psychology Carl Jung (Jung, 2016). According to this theory, the way in which individual manifests oneself depends on the characteristic attitude adopted by him or her. Those different attitudes toward themselves and the surrounding Jung called as extroversion and introversion. An extravert's source and direction for energy expression is mostly in the external world and outside surrounding, while an introvert get a source of energy mainly in his/her internal world and doesn't need other people for it.

Extroversion is characterized by the willing to take part in the external events, the need to interact with others, to receive acceptance of surrounding, the ability to make a lot of friends. Extravert has a strong wish to demonstrate him/herself   and seek to be in the centre of attention. The consciousness of extravert is much influenced by public opinion. Moral conflicts appear mainly in that case when "other people know". It is possible to say that extravert lives in others and through others.

The introvert tries to keep aside from external events. In large companies, he/she often feels lonely and lost. Introvert always seeks to do everything in own way and tries to follow own moral standards. His/her relationships with others become warmer only in a secure environment, in which he/she can put aside psychological defensive mechanisms. The number of friends and acquaintances is very limited for that type of personality. Introvert seeks to feel safe, but only

own internal world give him/her the feeling of safety. With comparison to extravert, who needs communication, involvement and attention, introvert needs regular retreats from external world?

For extravert type of personality it seems to be easier to adjust to environment than for introvert. However, both for extravert and introvert the sense of well-being depends of their awareness related to oneself.

6. Conclusion

I partly agree with the authors of book "Social Factors and Community Well-Being" who consider that well-being is still misconstrued and thus fails to provide helpful direction for public policy decision (Kee & Lee, 2016). In schools and universities there is no tradition to discuss with young people the relationships of well-being with a sense of community and dimensions of happiness. That's why the future scope of my research is to study the role of social media in promotion social well-being as a significant success factor for personal growth. Above mentioned Kim & Kim conducted the similar research into social capital and personal/subjective wellbeing focusing on the mediation role of social media. They found out that there is heterogeneity in the use of social networks by students in their everyday lives and that there is a positive indirect effect through which social media exert their influence, linking social capital and subjective well-being to the heterogeneity of the network (Kim & Kim, 2017). My goal is to focus on more psychological aspects. It should be mentioned that the notion of well-being is closely connected with positive psychology. According to this approach, in any situation we can significantly modify our life patterns and achieve more fulfilled and satisfied existence in personal, professional and social fields. In order to achieve it, we should understand the reasons of our destructive ways of thinking and behaviour. Then we can discover new emotional and social resources to meet our needs, wishes and dreams.

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