**The Ought Self**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of the project that I chose is to find the correlation between the undesired self, ought self, and the life satisfaction. The idea that how people rate the undesired self and ought self are closely attached to the life satisfaction was given and in order to find the correlation, it was necessary to measure the real self, undesired self, and ought self. After obtaining the rated items, the differences between the items were measured. With the differences, I found correlation between the differences and the life satisfaction. This research will provide information regarding the life satisfaction and address how undesired self and ought self may affect the life satisfaction of individual.

**Introduction**

The research question that was raised in this project was about how undesired or ought self may affect the life satisfaction individually. It is commonly held idea that ideal self may affect highly on the life satisfaction. We assume that when we achieve the goal and become closer to our ideal self, we have higher life satisfaction. However, in this research, the idea was reversed and seeks for the possibility that undesired or ought self may affect the life satisfaction. When the person thinks that he is different from his undesired self, he might have higher life satisfaction. Moreover, when the individual believe that others rate them positively, he might have higher life satisfaction.

There are several studies that dealt with the topic regarding the undesired self. The first article raised the same research question that I raised for this project. Daniel Ogilvie (1987) published an article about how undesired self-variable may affect larger than the ideal self on the life satisfaction. He explained how ideal self can be a pull to gain more life satisfaction and how undesired self can be a push to gain more life satisfaction. He used matrix system to obtain real self, ideal self, and undesired self. Then he used questionnaire to figure out the life satisfaction. According to the data analysis and the result, the hypothesis was true. The life satisfaction depends more on how far individual is from his negative images.

Next, I also found the article that talks about the undesired self. The article was, this time, related to self-esteem and narcissism instead of life satisfaction. Michael D. Barnett (2014) suggested options to think about the correlation of self-esteem, narcissism, ideal self, undesired self, and actual self. Since there are many different variables, there were different methods to measure. First, to identify self-variables, integrated index was used to measure. Then pathological narcissism inventory helped to find the values for narcissism and Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used to evaluate the values of self-esteem. After obtaining the necessary data, he analyzed the data by getting correlation between values and he also got a regression analysis. Even though there were some limitations, such as the fact that it used self-report data, the research might be the lead research for the follow up research with the topic of self-discrepancies and narcissistic behaviors. The study showed the least lead to the scene that undesired self is highly related to narcissistic behaviors.

Since my research question is similar to the first article, the article inspired how I should conduct my research. According to the first article I read, the undesired self is highly related to the life satisfaction. Moreover, I think I can expand this idea and make a connection that life satisfaction is also highly related to self-esteem. This idea is proven by the research of Unni K. Moksnes (2013). Life satisfaction is positively correlated to self-esteem, which means that if the life satisfaction is high then the self-esteem also can be high. Therefore, I think the second article also showed me that the undesired self is highly related to the life satisfaction. However, the argument of the second article was that the undesired self and also the ideal self could affect self-esteem. This means that ideal self might also affect my result and also goes along with the research question I raised in this study, which discuss not only the association between undesired self and life satisfaction but also ought self and life satisfaction.

In the end, through this research, I was able to find the correlation between undesired self, ought self and life satisfaction. In this study, I would measure how individual would rate real self, ought self, undesired self, and life satisfaction. The association between each variable would be revealed in this study. Though there might be some limitation with the study, the study would be able to investigate and initiate some discussion points regarding undesired self, ought self, and life satisfaction.

**Method**

Participants

The sample was obtained from people who currently attend Korean Jesus-Love United Methodist Church. A total of 37 people participated the study and answered the questionnaire even though the questionnaire was given to 60 people. The response rate was 61.7% and there weren’t any explanation why they declined to participate the study. The age range of the study was 19-30 years and the average age of the sample was around 24. 21 (56.7%) were male and 16 (43.3%) were female in the sample. There were total of 6 people were over 20s (16.2%) and the marital status of 3 people was married (8%).

Procedure

In this study, a set of 26 questions was given to the sample. The questionnaire was consisted of 20 questions regarding big five inventory to assess real self, undesired self, and ought self, and also five questions to assess life satisfaction. Big Five Inventory is consisted of 5 factors: Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Among the questions regarding big five inventory, 5 questions were asking about the real self accordingly to the 5 factors above. Another 5 questions asked about the undesired self and rest of 10 questions was asking about ought self. The last five questions to assess life satisfaction was from the scale of Ed Diener (1985). However, the original version of the scale has 7 scales when this study has 4 scales to assess the life satisfaction. All of the questions except the last question, which was asking for gender, were following the four-point Likert scale. The range of the scale was from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The questionnaire was an online survey and the link was given to the participants to access the questionnaire.

**Results**

All of the analysis of the data was done in Excel. With the collected data, mean scores, standard deviations, and correlations were calculated. The correlations were calculated with the value of differences between actual self and undesired self and life satisfaction. Also the value of differences between actual self and ought self and life satisfaction were used to find correlations.

Mean scores of actual self, undesired self, and ought self are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Mean scores and standard deviation of self-values

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Actual Self (SD) | Undesired Self (SD) | Ought Self (SD) |
| Openness to Experience | 3.08 (0.73) | 2.42 (0.77) | 2.31 (0.74) |
| Agreeableness | 2.72 (0.91) | 1.94 (0.89) | 3.31 (0.62) |
| Conscientiousness | 2.97 (0.74) | 2.61 (0.96) | 2.86 (0.90) |
| Extraversion | 2.81 (0.82) | 2.47 (0.99) | 2.64 (0.99) |
| Neuroticism | 2.89 (0.57) | 2.33 (0.72) | 2.03 (0.56) |

Aside from the mean scores of actual self, undesired self, and ought self according to the Big Five inventory, the mean of life satisfaction was 12.42. Since there are total of 5 questions asking about life satisfaction, the maximum score one can get for the life satisfaction is 20. However, with the mean scores, the correlation between self-variables and life satisfaction cannot be explained. Therefore the differences from real self to undesired self and the differences from real self to ought self are needed to find the correlation between the self-variables and life satisfaction. Table 2 would list the average of the differences.

**Table 2.** The average of the differences from real self to undesired selfand from real self to ought self

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Openness | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Extraversion | Neuroticism |
| Real – Undesired | 0.67 | 0.78 | 0.36 | 0.33 | 0.56 |
| Real – Ought | 0.78 | -0.58 | 0.11 | 0.17 | 0.89 |

For these values, simple subtraction was used. With the differences the correlation between the self-variables and life satisfaction can be calculated. Table 3 shows the result and the following graph shows the correlations.

**Table 3.** The correlations between the differences of real self and undesired self, the differences of real self and ought self, and life satisfaction (Openness to experience)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Real – Undesired | Real – Ought | Life Satisfaction |
| Real – Undesired |  | 0.65 | 0.10 |
| Real – Ought |  |  | 0.41 |
| Life Satisfaction |  |  |  |

**Table 4.** The correlations between the differences of real self and undesired self, the differences of real self and ought self, and life satisfaction (Conscientiousness)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Real – Undesired | Real – Ought | Life Satisfaction |
| Real – Undesired |  | -0.21 | 0.19 |
| Real – Ought |  |  | 0.11 |
| Life Satisfaction |  |  |  |

**Table 5.** The correlations between the differences of real self and undesired self, the differences of real self and ought self, and life satisfaction (Extraversion)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Real – Undesired | Real – Ought | Life Satisfaction |
| Real – Undesired |  | 0.17 | 0.19 |
| Real – Ought |  |  | 0.02 |
| Life Satisfaction |  |  |  |

**Table 6.** The correlations between the differences of real self and undesired self, the differences of real self and ought self, and life satisfaction (Neuroticism)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Real – Undesired | Real – Ought | Life Satisfaction |
| Real – Undesired |  | 0.40 | -0.08 |
| Real – Ought |  |  | 0.36 |
| Life Satisfaction |  |  |  |

**Table 7.** The correlations between the differences of real self and undesired self, the differences of real self and ought self, and life satisfaction (Agreeableness)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Real – Undesired | Real – Ought | Life Satisfaction |
| Real – Undesired |  | 0.63 | -0.08 |
| Real – Ought |  |  | -0.19 |
| Life Satisfaction |  |  |  |

**Discussion**

The research question that was raised for this study was that the undesired self or ought self may affect the life satisfaction. These days, it is common to repeatedly evaluate oneself and evaluate how others rate the one. Our boundaries of life are expanded and it is important to show good side of the individual to others. I thought this would affect the life satisfaction and conducted a research regarding this idea.

As the mean scores of each variable shows, the participants rated low for the undesired self. It can be predicted since people wouldn’t agree with the traits that they don’t want to be. The mean scores simply can explain that people would rate themselves positively and want others look at them positively. The interesting factor that I found was that even though the mean scores for actual self and ought self is relatively higher than the undesired self; there isn’t big difference between the means. The means of actual self and ought self couldn’t pass disagree line. Moreover, when means of actual self or ought self are definitely high, the means of undesired self were relatively much lower than other mean scores. This shows that when people strongly think strongly positive of their traits, they would rate themselves much lower on their undesired self. The first table also shows the standard deviation of each variable. Extraversion shows the highest standard deviation, which means that the data points of extraversion is dispersed and not really centered to the mean value. It might be due to the connotation of extraversion questions. The questions can be translated positively and negatively according to how people translate the question and extraversion is one of the items that can be controversial.

Then as for the data of the differences from real self to undesired self and the differences from real self to ought self shown in the table 2, none of the values are over 1. Even though it was means of the differences, it shows that there aren’t big differences between the values of the variables. However, as expected, the differences from real self to undesired self are all positive. The only negative value in the second table was agreeableness section. From this, I can assume that people want others to think that they care about others when they might not be so caring.

After getting the differences, the correlations could be calculated. Table 3 to table 7 show the correlations between the differences of real self and undesired self, the differences of real self and ought self, and life satisfaction for each Big Five traits. Out of 5 tables, only 3 graphs were attached after the table: openness to experience, neuroticism, and agreeableness. Among the 3 results that might explain the research question that was raised in the beginning of the study, the criteria of openness to experience showed the highest correlation. The correlations between the differences from the real self and ought self and the life satisfaction was 0.41. Thinking that the usual high correlation in the social psychology is around 0.3, the correlation value of 0.41 is pretty high. This can be interpreted that the ought self is highly related to the life satisfaction for openness to experience criteria. On the other hand, the graph was not attached but the correlation of the differences from the real self and ought self and the life satisfaction for extraversion was 0.02. Similar to the mean values, the factor that extraversion can be controversial topic and can be interpreted as positive or negative connotation might have affected the result.

There were several limitations of the study. The first limitation was the quantity of the questions. The questionnaire I created supposed to measure the Big Five traits of people but there were only 20 questions regarding one’s personality trait. 5 questions cannot explain one’s actual self. Moreover, for this study, I worked by myself and collected data only from the close relationship of mine. Therefore, all participants were Asians and there weren’t any ethnicity variety. Due to this limitation, the result of the study cannot be generalized. There was one more limitation to the study and it is that all of the data was collected with only one method – self-report. Self-report can be biased and the reliability of the data might be lowered and cause random errors.

For the future research, to reduce random errors, the quantity of the questions should be expanded. One sentence cannot be the only standard to assess one’s personality. Then the sample needs to be expanded as well. More variety of the ethnicity should be added to the sample. When the variety of the ethnicity is added to the sample of the study, it can reduce the error that it might cultural effect.

In summary, the results of the study suggest the possibility that the ought self affect the life satisfaction. As we get to know more people, we tend to care other’s view of oneself, which led to the extent that ought self affect our life satisfaction.

**References**

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