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Navigating the Complexity of Psychological Well-Being: The Role of Self-Knowledge, Intrinsic Motivation, and Self-Construal

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Abstract

The present research stems from a deep interest in understanding and exploring psychological well-being, a complex and contentious concept, yet profoundly important. The complexity partially arises from the fact that research on well-being intersects with the ongoing debate transcending multiple social sciences: the juxtaposition of relativism and universals in human nature. The definition of optimal experience has been indeed a subject of considerable discussion throughout intellectual history, and analyzing this debate is of great importance because of its considerable theoretical and practical implications. Moreover, the emergence of positive psychology has incited a growing interest in the topic, underscoring that well-being extends beyond merely the absence of mental illness. This understanding has expanded the scope of psychology, moving past pathologies to encompass preventive measures and the enhancement of well-being.

This study begins with a comprehensive review of the existing literature in the field, particularly focusing on the two prevailing perspectives that have influenced well-being research: the hedonic approach, emphasizing happiness and the pursuit of pleasure while minimizing pain, and the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realization.

Building upon this foundation, this thesis aims to review the insights from authors representing both perspectives, providing an enriched understanding of well-being. Furthermore, it investigates the intricate relationships between different types of psychological well-being and the role of other key psychological processes, particularly self-knowledge, mindfulness, and needs satisfaction, within an Italian sample that was collected by the researcher for this study.

The research methodology will be explicated, detailing the process of data collection and analysis.

By comprehensively exploring and examining these aspects, this research aims to deepen our understanding of psychological well-being, offering insights for both academia and practical applications.

Chapter 1: Psychological Well-being

1.1 Psychological Well-being: an Overview

Psychological well-being is a multifaceted and complex concept that includes optimal psychological functioning and experience. Throughout intellectual history, there has been substantial debate surrounding this topic, which holds significant theoretical and practical implications.

Research on well-being can be broadly categorized into two perspectives: the hedonic and the eudaimonic. The distinction between these perspectives arises from varying conceptualizations of well-being. The hedonic perspective emphasizes subjective well-being, often equating it with happiness. It is formally defined as experiencing more positive affect, less negative affect, and having a higher level of life satisfaction (e.g., Diener & Lucas, 1999). This approach follows what Tooby and Cosmides (1992) referred to as the "standard social science model", which considers the human organism initially to be relatively empty and malleable, gaining meaning in accordance with social and cultural influencing.

On the other hand, the eudaimonic perspective focuses on psychological well-being, which is defined more broadly in terms of the fully functioning person. This approach assigns significance to human nature and aims to uncover and understand the conditions that enhance or diminish this inherent content. In the eudaimonic literature, well-being has been operationalized through various approaches. For example, Ryff and Singer (1998) proposed a model that is based on six dimensions of psychological well-being. Alternatively, Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasize the three fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

The study of well-being has become increasingly complex over the centuries due to terminological confusion, particularly surrounding the translation of the Greek term "eudaimonia." This term has been translated both as happiness and well-being, leading to situations where happiness and well-being are sometimes treated as synonymous and other times as distinct concepts. Asking Americans about their happiness and Greeks about their eudaimonia involves different inquiries, one pertaining to psychology and the other to ethics. The imprecision in language can significantly impact empirical research, therefore addressing this issue becomes crucial for the successful investigation of well-being.

Within philosophical literature, the term "happiness" is frequently employed as a synonym for "well-being." When discussing pre-modern philosophy, "happiness" often corresponds to the controversial translation of the Greek term "eudaimonia." However, attributing happiness to individuals within the realm of well-being implies a discussion on leading a fulfilling life rather than simply experiencing

happiness. While being happy can be considered a psychological matter, the concept of a happy life involves more than just mental aspects.

In a philosophical context, happiness encapsulates the entirety of one's existence, even if that individual is habitually unhappy. Though such a conceptual use is not widespread, it bears the potential to instigate confusion. In contrast, "happiness" is typically connected with a strictly psychological connotation, signifying a comprehensive facet of a person's mental state.

However, it is critical to note that the concepts of well-being and the psychological understanding of happiness are not interchangeable. The state of well-being must be delineated from the fleeting emotion or mood associated with feeling happy. For instance, Aristotle's theory did not encompass happiness in the psychological sense, but rather presented a conceptualization of well-being. In parallel, the Epicurean conception of eudaimonia, which pivots solely on the pleasures of tranquility or ataraxia, should not be mistaken for happiness in the psychological perspective. The Epicureans adopted a hedonistic viewpoint of eudaimonia, establishing a value proposition that pleasure is the ultimate good for an individual. Both Epicurus and Aristotle construed "eudaimonia" as a fulfilling life for the person experiencing it. Their disagreement was not restricted to semantics or conceptual variances, rather it included a substantial ethical divergence regarding the ideal life for humans.

In the realm of contemporary psychological research on well-being, there is a convergence of both objectivist and subjectivist perspectives. Objectivist viewpoints echo the Aristotelian emphasis on the objective aspects of well-being, such as virtues and human flourishing. This perspective underscores the tangible and concrete elements of well-being, recognizing that certain universal factors generally contribute to a fulfilling life. Simultaneously, the subjectivist viewpoint anchors itself in the individual's subjective experiences and evaluations of their lives, akin to the subjective hedonistic views expressed by the Epicureans. This perspective posits that well-being is highly personal and largely dictated by an individual's unique life experiences, emotions, and values. It underscores that individuals can derive pleasure and satisfaction from various sources, challenging and expanding traditional notions of well-being.

The discourse and contention surrounding well-being, as we've observed, have long-standing roots. Yet, in the Modern Era, there has been a noticeable deceleration in the philosophical examination of well-being within the sphere of ethical philosophy. This decline can be attributed to a marked shift in perspectives surrounding personal autonomy and well-being. Traditionally, individuals were not seen as authoritative determinants of their own well-being. This viewpoint radically transformed with the rise of the standard economic view in the modern era, aligning personal well-being with the fulfillment of individual desires. Drawing inspiration from the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and self-governance, modern liberals underscored individual sovereignty in matters of personal

welfare. They championed personal freedom and resource availability as fundamental elements for pursuing one's aspirations. According to this paradigm, the essence of human needs revolves around the freedom and the ability to pursue personal goals according to individual preferences and priorities, thereby advocating empowerment over enlightenment. Under this perspective, the focus is primarily on addressing the needs of individuals through economic means, prioritizing practical solutions over philosophical or psychological considerations.

However, even with the attainment of these personal freedoms and goals, it was noted that well-being hadn't escalated as significantly as anticipated, especially in wealthier societies. This realization prompted a re-evaluation: was this truly enough? Did individuals fully understand what was best for their well-being? These questions catalyzed a renewed exploration into the philosophical and psychological dimensions of well-being.

It is probably no coincidence that during periods of economic prosperity, particularly in the 1960s and early 2000s, there was a resurgence of interest in the psychological facets of well-being. This was likely triggered by the realization that material wealth was not the definitive answer to well-being. This resurgence coincided with the emergence and widespread acceptance of positive psychology, a discipline that emphasized that well-being extends beyond the mere absence of mental illness. This shift in understanding greatly broadened our conceptualization of what it means to lead a good life, with positive psychology offering an enriched understanding of well-being and leading us closer to the philosophically diverse perspectives of our ancient thinkers. Indeed, research on well-being has flourished in the field of psychology over the past four decades, aligning closely with the hedonistic tradition. This can be partly attributed to the groundbreaking work of influential psychologists like Diener (1984) who pioneered the exploration of subjective well-being, which is primarily perceived in terms of life satisfaction. However, some positive psychologists explicitly reject hedonistic theories and instead advocate for eudaimonistic accounts of well-being, which align with the objective list theory of well-being. Martin Seligman, one of the pioneers of positive psychology, has argued that positive psychology should not solely focus on happiness, but also emphasize positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Additionally, authors such as Ryff (1989) have developed models and measures of psychological well-being within the eudaimonic tradition, challenging the prevailing hedonistic view of well-being in psychology.

In the contemporary landscape of psychological research, well-being occupies a central stage. Within the ambit of this dissertation, we will delve into the nuances of both the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives on well-being. Although these viewpoints share certain commonalities, they each offer distinctive insights into the nature and promotion of well-being. The forthcoming chapter will serve to scrutinize the associated research literature underpinning these perspectives. This examination will

help us to foster an all-encompassing understanding of the multifarious individual, contextual, and cultural elements influencing well-being.

1.2 The Hedonic Perspective

The hedonic viewpoint aligns psychological well-being with the experiences of pleasure or happiness, a perspective that has its roots in ancient philosophical thought. For instance, the Greek philosopher Aristippus, founder of the Cyrenaic school in the 4th century BC, posited that the cardinal objective of life is to maximize the experience of pleasure. In contrast, the Epicureans, renowned for their refined hedonistic philosophy, held nuanced views on the types of pleasures to be pursued. They underscored the value of "static" pleasures, such as tranquility or ataraxia. Their stance diverged from the more immediate and tangible pleasures Aristippus and the Cyrenaics advocated for, signaling the breadth and depth of interpretation within the hedonic philosophical tradition.

The hedonic perspective extends to more modern interpretations as well. Thomas Hobbes, in his seminal work "Leviathan" (1651), following in the footsteps of the hedonic tradition, asserts that happiness is rooted in the successful fulfillment of our human nature. Moreover, Utilitarian philosophers, such as Jeremy Bentham, argued that an ideal society is one where individuals endeavor to maximize their pleasure and self-interest. In his influential work "Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation" (1789), Bentham famously posited, "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do." Bentham's approach to hedonism suggests that the quality of life is proportional to the quantity of pleasant experiences we encounter, while an increase in painful experiences diminishes it. He proposed that the worth of these experiences could be quantified by evaluating two core components: their duration and their intensity. This tenet underscores Bentham's commitment to the quantifiable, demonstrable aspects of well-being, as seen through the lens of the hedonic tradition.

However, a serious objection to this evaluative stance of hedonism was raised by Thomas Carlyle, who criticized the hedonistic component of utilitarianism as the "philosophy of swine." His point was that simple hedonism treats all pleasures as equal, whether they are base animalistic pleasures or higher aesthetic appreciations. To respond to this criticism, another utilitarian philosopher of the 19th century, John Stuart Mill, proposed an alternative to simple hedonism by distinguishing between "higher" and "lower" pleasures. He argued that happiness is a central good and introduced a third property, "quality," alongside Bentham's quantitative properties of duration and intensity. Mill's claim was that certain pleasures, by their very nature, are inherently more valuable than others. Due to this added complexity, some argue that Mill's position can no longer be classified as traditional hedonism. If higher pleasures are considered higher because of their nature, that aspect cannot be reduced to

pleasantness alone, which could be determined solely by duration and intensity. Nevertheless, there is logical space for a hedonist position that allows properties such as nobility to influence pleasantness, while still emphasizing that what ultimately determines value is only the pleasantness itself. Indeed, hedonism, as a perspective on well-being, has ranged from a narrow focus on bodily pleasures to a broader focus on appetites and self-interests. Psychologists who have embraced the hedonic view have tended to adopt a broader conception of hedonism that encompasses both the mental and physical aspects of pleasure (Kubovy, 1999). In a groundbreaking volume that heralded "the emergence of a new field of psychology," Kahneman et al. (1999) defined hedonic psychology as the study of "what makes experiences and life pleasant or unpleasant". The title of their work, "Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology," clearly suggests that within this paradigm, well-being and hedonism are essentially synonymous. The prevailing viewpoint among hedonic psychologists is that well-being encompasses subjective happiness and pertains to the experience of pleasure versus displeasure in a broad sense, including all judgments about the positive and negative elements of life. Happiness is thus not limited to physical hedonism, it can also stem from the achievement of goals or valued outcomes in various domains (Diener et al., 1998).

Numerous methods exist to assess the pleasure-pain continuum in human experience, but most research within the field of hedonic psychology has primarily relied on measures of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) (Diener & Lucas, 1999). From the SWB standpoint, well-being is considered subjective because it requires individuals to assess the extent of their overall wellness in general terms. Operationally, SWB is defined as experiencing a high level of positive affect, a low level of negative affect, and a strong sense of life satisfaction.

When considering the first two constructs, Diener and Emmons' (1984) compellingly demonstrated that trait measures of Positive Affect (PA) and Negative Affect (NA) were uncorrelated, thereby facilitating the conceptualization of their independent contributions to the hedonic component of overall subjective well-being. Building upon this groundwork, Larsen and Diener (1985) found that the intensity of people's affective states typically has no bearing on overall subjective well-being. Instead, the frequency of positive versus negative states in a person's life over time emerged as the most significant predictor of global subjective well-being in affective terms (Larsen, Diener, & Emmons, 1985). Indeed, one of the most effective measures of the affective component of subjective well-being is the one developed by Fordyce (1988), which asks individuals to estimate the percentage of time they feel happy, neutral, and unhappy over a given time.

Addressing the third component of SWB—life satisfaction—this element is fundamentally a cognitive evaluation of one's overall life. Owing to its cognitive aspect, this component may be perceived as an extension surpassing traditional hedonic notions. This observation has led certain

scholars to argue for a more precise interpretation of hedonic well-being, suggesting that happiness should be indexed solely by positive and negative affect, given that life satisfaction does not strictly adhere to the hedonic concept. However, it is crucial to recognize that SWB aligns with the hedonistic perspective, which views pleasure and pain as pivotal in determining an individual's well-being and happiness. By incorporating cognitive aspects such as life satisfaction, SWB can be seen as a more nuanced form of hedonism, in alignment with the ideas proposed by Stuart Mill. In fact, SWB is often synonymously used with the term "happiness," indicating that maximizing one's well-being is akin to maximizing feelings of happiness. This interpretation provides a clear and precise direction for research and intervention efforts, steering towards identifying factors and strategies that enhance happiness and overall well-being. The clarity and specificity inherent in measuring subjective well-being have fostered significant scholarly interest and driven research in this domain. Notably, Diener's research has been instrumental in developing reliable measures of subjective well-being and empirically testing predictions stemming from related theories.

This focus on empirical research has resulted in an increased volume of studies investigating subjective well-being within the domain of hedonic research, compared to studies of eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

1.3 The Eudaimonic Perspective

Despite the prevalence of the hedonic view in recent decades, it is essential to acknowledge the extensive and enduring history of the eudaimonic perspective on well-being. Rooted in ancient philosophical traditions from both the East and the West, the eudaimonic perspective offers a profound exploration of human flourishing that surpasses the pursuit of mere pleasure and happiness. Eudaimonic theories assert that not all desires, even if they result in pleasurable experiences, necessarily lead to well-being upon fulfillment. Indeed, some desires may be detrimental to individuals and hinder their overall wellness. Thus, according to this perspective, subjective happiness cannot be equated with well-being. This concept of going beyond individual pleasure and connecting well-being with virtue originated with ancient ethical philosophers who sought to determine the best life for an individual. In their exploration, they embraced rational egoism, which posits that an individual's strongest motivation is always to promote his own well-being. However, they also recognized that morality encompasses considerations for the interests of others. This raised a crucial inquiry: If egoism is indeed correct, what incentive do individuals have to act morally? To defend the importance of morality, these philosophers asserted that a person's well-being is constituted by their virtue, so acting in accordance with moral virtues is not only beneficial for others

but also essential for one's own well-being. By intertwining morality with well-being, these philosophers sought to reconcile the pursuit of self-interest with the importance of ethical conduct, effectively demonstrating that acting ethically does not necessitate advocating for self-sacrifice.

Aristotle indeed argued that virtue promotes both the well-being of others and our own, illustrating that the well-being of others can serve as a compelling reason to act, while never conflicting with reasons based on our individual well-being. When probing into the nature of pleasure and its association with well-being, Aristotle proposed that authentic well-being is achieved through the nurturing of moral excellence and the enactment of virtuous actions. For Aristotle, this involves striking a balance between extremes and cultivating virtuous emotions such as courage, generosity, and temperance. Contrary to the Stoics, who deemed external possessions inconsequential to well-being, Aristotle integrates external factors, including wealth, health, and social relationships, into his conceptualization of well-being. Nevertheless, his central objective is the actualization of one's inner potential, a realization of self-fulfillment predicated on individual disposition and talent, or what he referred to as the 'daimon,' a form of spirit bestowed upon each person at birth. Moreover, Aristotle discerns between various types of pleasures, underlining that those derived from intellectual and moral endeavors hold greater worth, leading to a more persistent and profound sense of well-being

Aristotle's ideas exert such significant influence that commentators often use the term "eudaimonic" to characterize Aristotelian theories. It is, however, vital to recognize that Aristotelian theories constitute merely one segment within the broader spectrum of Hellenistic ethics, often referred to as eudaimonistic theories. These theories are collectively unified around the premise that well-being encompasses the fulfillment of one's nature. Despite this commonality, there are significant variations in these theories' perspectives concerning the interpretation of human nature and how best to fulfill it. Because of this aim to delineate the constituent elements of well-being, eudaimonistic theories are also called "objective list theories"(Parfit, 1984). In essence, they seek to create a comprehensive list that captures the essential components of well-being.

The central challenge for these theories is deciding on what precisely should be included in this list, considering the multitude of perspectives on human nature and the path to its fulfillment.

Nested within this philosophical tradition, several psychological approaches have further developed these concepts to create more nuanced interpretations of well-being.

David Norton (1976), for instance, establishes a link between eudaimonism and Maslow's theory of self-actualization, highlighting their shared focus on personal growth, fulfillment, and the realization of one's potential.

In a similar vein, Ryff and Singer, authoritative figures in the field of eudaimonic psychological well-being, have incorporated Maslow's insights into their comprehensive framework, referred to as

Psychological Well-Being (PWB) (Ryff, 1989a). Their multidimensional model of well-being also draws from Aristotle's philosophy, existential and humanistic psychology (Allport, 1961; Rogers, 1962), as well as clinical and developmental psychology (Jahoda, 1958; Jung, 1933). Ryff and Singer's goal in integrating such diverse theoretical perspectives is to pinpoint recurring themes and convergences among various constructs of positive functioning (Ryff, 1982, 1985, 1989b). This comprehensive exploration resulted in the identification of six key dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, personal growth, relatedness, autonomy, environmental mastery, and purpose in life. These dimensions serve as both the theoretical and operational definition of their Psychological Well-Being (PWB) model, stipulating the conditions that promote emotional and physical health (Ryff & Singer, 1998). Their conceptualization of human health is underpinned by three essential principles. First, positive health extends beyond a purely medical discourse and fundamentally engages with philosophical questions concerning the nature of a good life. Second, a thorough assessment of positive health must take into account both mental and physical components, acknowledging their reciprocal influence. Lastly, positive human health is best understood as a dynamic, multidimensional process, rather than a static endpoint. Given Ryff and Singer's emphasis on well-being as a pursuit of realizing one's true potential, it follows their critique (1998) of the use of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) as a reliable marker of healthy living. In contrast, Diener et al. (1998) maintain that SWB research allows individuals to voice what brings them happiness, whereas Ryff and Singer's eudaimonic framework prescribes well-being based on expert definitions.

On the topic of SWB, Ryan and Deci, two significant contributors to the field of eudaimonic well-being, offer a contrasting viewpoint. They posit that the satisfaction of individuals' basic psychological needs typically promotes both subjective and eudaimonic well-being. They propose that the traditional measures of SWB, which include satisfaction with one's life, prevalence of positive emotions, and scarcity of negative ones, often serve as reliable indicators of psychological wellness. Echoing the ideas of Rogers (1963), Ryan and Deci perceive emotional states as significant barometers of an individual's overall psychological well-being. These states, they argue, mirror the extent to which an individual's basic psychological needs are being met, and how closely their experiences align with their authentic self. This perspective harmoniously integrates the notion of subjective happiness with the concept of eudaimonic fulfillment, offering a comprehensive outlook on the multifaceted nature of well-being.

The divergences between the perspectives of Ryan and Deci, and Ryff and Singer extend beyond their respective views on SWB. Although they share crucial similarities, such as recognizing the importance of being fully functioning as proposed by Rogers (1963), and valuing eudaimonic

qualities like autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they differ in their conceptualization of the relationship between these qualities and well-being.

In the SDT proposed by Ryan and Deci, autonomy, competence, and relatedness are considered the primary factors that foster and promote well-being. Conversely, Ryff and Singer's approach treats these qualities as defining characteristics of well-being itself. In essence, while SDT focuses on fulfilling basic psychological needs to enhance well-being, Ryff and Singer integrate these qualities directly into their definition of well-being.

Waterman, another influential figure in eudaimonic theories, provides yet another perspective. Rather than employing the components of psychological well-being as subscales to measure eudaimonic living as a global or individual difference variable, as done by Ryff and Singer, Waterman uses a single scale to assess the degree to which specific activities bring individuals a sense of fulfillment. This approach allows the concept of eudaimonia to be content-free and aims to discern whether engagement in these activities evokes feelings of vitality, fulfillment, and authenticity. Waterman's perspective suggests that eudaimonic well-being arises when individuals' life activities align with their deeply held values and fully engage their capacities. This alignment leads to a state of intense vitality and authenticity, which Waterman terms "personal expressiveness" (PE) (1990). By emphasizing the individual's subjective evaluation of activities and their alignment with personal values, Waterman introduces a unique viewpoint within the eudaimonic tradition, one that accentuates the importance of subjective experiences and the role of personal values in achieving eudaimonic well-being. Empirically, Waterman has demonstrated that SWB and PE are strongly correlated, yet indicative of distinct types of experiences. PE is closely associated with activities fostering personal growth and presenting challenges, while hedonic enjoyment is more tied to relaxation, being free from problems, and overall happiness. This underscores the notion that both personal growth and hedonic satisfaction are crucial, yet distinct, components of a fulfilled life.

1.4 Complementarity of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Perspectives

Each perspective on well-being brings valuable insights, but they also face certain criticisms, often raised by proponents of opposing viewpoints.

Eudaimonic theories, emphasizing self-realization and potential actualization, face critiques primarily for their perceived elitism. Critics argue that these theories may impose universally beneficial values, disregarding individual's personal desires or values, and potentially assign undue authority to external expert judgments (Diener, 1998).

Another critique lies in their underestimation or neglect of subjective well-being. Diener and colleagues argue that excluding subjective well-being from Ryff and Singer's concept of "health" and the good life is an oversight. Diener's research highlights subjective well-being's intrinsic value, cherished by most individuals. His studies indicate that subjective well-being is valued not just in Western cultures, but also among students in less industrialized nations such as Brazil, Ghana, and Indonesia (Diener et al., 2009).

Moreover, hedonic psychologists argue that Ryff and Singer's listed positive characteristics are valued not for their universal worth, but for their potential contributions to subjective well-being. Attributes like purpose, mastery, and self-regard hold value only if they aid individuals in crafting fulfilling lives.

Conversely, the hedonic perspective, focusing on pleasure attainment and pain avoidance, faces its own challenges. Its main critique is the potential overreliance on subjectivity in defining well-being. As Ryff and Singer suggest, personal desires and beliefs may not necessarily promote authentic well-being, and indeed, can be detrimental or irrelevant to it (Darwall, 2002; Sumner, 1996).

Further, the hedonic perspective often faces criticism for its lack of a robust theoretical underpinning. Its proponents typically adopt an empirical approach, prioritizing data collection before developing theories. This has raised objections from theorists such as Ryff and Singer (1998), who advocate for a stronger theoretical grounding. In response, Diener and his colleagues (1998) express a certain skepticism towards grand theories that are constructed without systematic research, arguing instead for an approach that, while being theory-based, is not purely theory-driven.

Despite these criticisms, it is crucial to understand the complementary roles of both the eudaimonic and hedonic perspectives in well-being literature. The literature on psychological well-being, as stated by Huta (2018), can indeed be perplexing, in part due to the varied definitions of well-being theories. According to Huta and Waterman (2014), these definitions can be categorized into four distinct "definition categories": orientations, behaviors, experiences, and functioning. Huta (2013, 2015, 2016) argues that both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives should primarily be defined as orientations. Hedonism focuses on seeking pleasurable experiences, while eudaimonism emphasizes the pursuit of quality functioning. So, despite the criticisms of each perspective, it is important to recognize their complementary nature in the study of well-being. Further strengthening this viewpoint, Peterson's study (2005) found that integrating eudaimonia and hedonia is associated with the highest life satisfaction. This finding underscores that individuals not need to choose between hedonia and eudaimonia. On the contrary, embracing both aspects can lead to more comprehensive and diversified well-being. By incorporating both perspectives into well-being research, we can

enrich our understanding and cultivate a more nuanced approach to individual and societal well-being.

1.5 Psychological Well-being and Health

The relationship between physical health and psychological well-being is complex, multidimensional, and deeply intertwined with our understanding of health itself.

While the importance of objective health measures in predicting subjective well-being is still a subject of debate (Okun et al., 1984), research increasingly points to an intricate interplay between the two, shaped by factors such as individual perceptions, emotional experiences, sociocultural contexts, and socio-structural determinants.

This relationship is underscored by two dominant models of health: the biomedical model and the biopsychosocial model. The biomedical model, a traditional paradigm prevalent for the last 300 years, views illness primarily as a product of abnormal biological processes (Miyamoto et al., 2019). This conception stems from the mind-body dualism, which can be traced back tothe scientific derivation of Cartesian psychophysical dualism that has dominated scientific thinking since the 17th century. According to Descarte's concept of man, human psychic life is divided into two instances: the res extensa and the res cogitans. The res extensa, associated with the physical body, is susceptible to sensory deception and can draw erroneous conclusions, while the res cogitans represents the thinking and rational mind that questions. The mind-body dualism represents a significant division of the human psyche as a result of scientific inquiry, with its power and effectiveness primarily focused on the quantifiable and measurable aspects of the res extensa. Consequently, this approach tends to reduce the understanding of the psychological realm to the phenomenological level. Unfortunately, this perspective has often marginalized psychological factors in the consideration of health outcomes (Engel, 1977) and neglected the influence of emotions on health (Melnechuk, 1988, p. 183).

Furthermore, the advancement of medical technology has further deepened the divide between the mind and body within the fundamental framework of health. As attention shifted away from philosophical realms that deeply explored human well-being, health came to be defined primarily by the absence of physical illness. The central objective of the medical model became focused on restoring the body from a state of negative functioning back to a neutral state. This emphasis on the negative aspects of health has hindered the advancement of a comprehensive positive health agenda (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

Contrarily, the biopsychosocial model proposes that health is the outcome of an intricate interplay between biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors. It advocates for a holistic approach that

considers individuals and their health in an integrated system, encompassing micro-level biological processes, psychological experiences, and macro-level social processes (Engel, 1977).

The differing perspectives of these two models on the role of culture in health are noteworthy. While the biomedical model largely overlooks sociocultural contexts in the etiology of disease, the biopsychosocial model incorporates these contexts, acknowledging the importance of cultural nuances in health outcomes.

Indeed, the cultural context plays a vital role in the relationship between physical health and psychological well-being. Cultures differ in their framing of distress in terms of psychological or somatic states. For example, a study has shown that Canadian outpatients are more likely to report psychological symptoms, while Chinese outpatients tend to report more somatic symptoms (Ryder et al., 2008).

This reflects cultural variations in the conceptualization of well-being and distress. The biomedical model has shaped the treatment of psychiatric and nonpsychiatric illnesses in Western medicine, but it is not universally accepted across all cultures (Fabrega, 1975). Indeed, in non-Western contexts such as Chinese medicine, there is a greater focus on symptom clusters and restoring balance in the body, mirroring views of health in many cultures, including ancient Greek and Indian cultures. Cultural beliefs also influence attitudes toward health-related behaviors such as eating and smoking (Rozin et al., 1999), underscoring the importance of cultural considerations in understanding the link between physical health and psychological well-being.

Within the broader biopsychosocial perspective, there are also differing views on the relationship between emotions and well-being. The hedonic perspective suggests that subjective well-being is influenced by experiencing more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions (Diener & Lucas, 2000). However, the eudaimonic perspective emphasizes that well-being is not solely about feeling positive emotions but also about being fully functioning and engaged in life (Rogers, 1963).

In this view, certain negative emotions, such as sadness, can contribute to greater well-being when experienced in appropriate contexts (Parrott, 1993). Research on emotions and SWB has examined the frequency, intensity, and valence of affective experiences. Studies have indicated that global judgments of subjective well-being are more influenced by the frequency of positive experiences rather than their intensity (Diener et al., 1991). Interestingly, intense positive emotions may even be accompanied by increased unpleasant affect (Larsen & Diener, 1987).

Furthermore, emotional regulation strategies, such as suppressing or withholding emotions, have been associated with adverse psychological and physical health effects (King & Pennebaker, 1998), whereas emotional disclosure has shown benefits for well-being (Butzel & Ryan, 1997). These

findings support the eudaimonic perspective's emphasis on emotional access and congruence as significant factors for well-being.

Moreover, the eudaimonic perspective posits that certain psychological conditions and behaviors associated with eudaimonic well-being can also promote better physical health outcomes. Strong positive relations with others have been linked to positive emotional experiences, which, in turn, activate stress-reducing and disease-resistant functions (Ryff & Singer, 1998). Subjective vitality, a state of psychological and physical energy, has been found to correlate with physical symptoms and health habits (Ryan & Frederick, 1997).

Studies have revealed associations between various dimensions of eudaimonic well-being and biomarkers related to neuroendocrine regulation, immune functioning, cardiovascular risk, and sleep patterns (Ryff et al., 2004a; Friedman et al., 2005; Urry et al., 2004). These findings suggest that living an eudaimonic life can contribute to better physiological functioning and overall physical health.

So, while physical health can impact well-being, the reverse is also true. The connection between physical health and psychological well-being is intricate, characterized by bidirectional relationships. While objective health measures alone do not determine subjective well-being, research suggests that eudaimonic well-being and positive emotional experiences can contribute to better physical health outcomes.

Understanding these relationships and their underlying physiological processes can inform holistic approaches to health promotion, emphasizing the importance of considering both mental and physical components of well-being. By integrating the insights from the biomedical and biopsychosocial models, acknowledging the profound influence of cultural context, and recognizing the role of emotions as described by the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives, we can advance our knowledge and practices in promoting flourishing and optimal well-being.

1.6 Psychological Well-being Across the Lifespan

The field of lifespan psychology has made significant strides in recent decades, with some of the most compelling findings centering around well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Given that resources, abilities, and support systems evolve with age, lifespan studies prove to be especially pertinent in well-being research. They foster a more comprehensive understating of subjective well-being and eudaimonic well-being dynamics. It is indeed crucial to examine motivations across the entire lifespan for a nuanced understanding of well-being. Nevertheless, for a long time, the focus of most studies has been primarily on the predictors, outcomes, and correlates of well-being motivations, with little to no

regard given to their evolution over time (LeFebvre & Huta, 2021). Well-being motivations embody entire systems of values, priorities, and information processing approaches (Steger & Shin, 2012). Unraveling how these priorities adjust with age can enable us to predict and elucidate age-related changes in various aspects of well-being. This, in turn, can shed light on other outcomes such as interpersonal relationships, occupational objectives, and civic behavior.

Certain findings from lifespan studies that may initially appear anomalous have actually provided new insights into the dynamics of well-being. For instance, the so-called "aging paradox" suggests that despite the challenges and losses that come with aging, subjective well-being often increases with advanced age (Carstensen, 1998; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998).

To reconcile this apparent contradiction, research in the field of SWB, such as the study by Diener & Lucas (2000), demonstrated that while positive affect may wane with age, elements like life satisfaction and negative affect generally remain stable. This aspect of stability, which was not recognized in the initial studies, could potentially be due to the fact that many of these earlier measures of positive affect focused exclusively on states of excitement. This emphasis could explain why initial research indicated a decrease in well-being with advancing age. While measures that are less centered on activated states might not signal a decline; in fact, they could disclose a different trend. Consequently, the decrease in well-being with increasing age observed in initial studies was not actually a drop in overall well-being, but rather a shift in the correlates of happiness between younger and older individuals (Diener & Suh, 1998).

Diener and Diener assert that there may be some basic universal aspects of well-being, but also specific conditions, characteristics, and activities that boost satisfaction for some people but have minimal impact on others (1995). This implies that understanding well-being necessitates considering both commonalities and individual differences.

The eudaimonic perspective also provides useful insights into these variables. Ryan and La Guardia (2000) proposed that basic psychological needs influence well-being across the lifespan, but the ways these needs manifest and are satisfied can change with age due to various life tasks, challenges, and shifting opportunities. Researchers have particularly emphasized the role of age-specific social contexts, such as school and work, in affecting well-being.

The work of Ryff, which characterizes well-being in a multidimensional way, is particularly applicable for the descriptive study of well-being shifts across the lifespan. Ryff has examined whether different components of well-being fluctuate with age and if individuals' perceptions of well-being evolve over time. The answer to both queries is in the affirmative.

In a 1991 study, Ryff found that older adults experienced less personal growth compared to younger groups, middle-aged adults demonstrated more autonomy than both younger and older groups, and

both middle-aged and older groups showed a greater sense of mastery than the younger group. However, no age-related trends were discernible in terms of positive relationships with others or self-acceptance.

As for individuals' conceptions of well-being, Ryff (1989b) discovered that while good relationships and the pursuit of pleasurable activities were crucial to well-being across all age groups, there were noticeable age differences in other dimensions. Younger adults placed more emphasis on self-knowledge, competence, and self-acceptance, whereas older adults focused more on their capacity to positively manage changes.

Moreover, the factorial validity of the theoretical model of PWB has been scrutinized by several studies, which also examined its association with age-related changes over time. Age diversity in psychological well-being has been apparent for both men and women. Some aspects demonstrate incremental profiles with age (e.g., autonomy, environmental mastery), while others display marked decreases from young adulthood to old age (e.g., purpose in life, personal growth), and some show minimal age variations (e.g., positive relations with others, self-acceptance - in women specifically) (Cheng & Chan, 2005; Clarke et al., 2001; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; van Dierendonck, 2004). These patterns have been reaffirmed in various studies (Ryff, 1989a, 1991; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). It remains uncertain whether these patterns reflect age-related changes or generational differences. However, other longitudinal analyses have established that PWB indeed evolves with aging, especially when individuals grapple with life challenges and transitions like caregiving or community relocation (Kling et al., 1997a, b; Kwan et al., 2003).

These observations are in line with Carstensen's (1998) proposition that the functions of relationships change with age. According to the socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1998), one's perception of time plays a pivotal role in selecting and pursuing social goals. This theory posits that social motivations generally fall into two categories: knowledge-related goals and emotion regulation goals. When time is perceived as open-ended, knowledge-related goals gain precedence.In contrast, when time is perceived as limited, emotion-related goals take precedence. The correlation between remaining lifetime and chronological age induces age-related variations in social goals. Nevertheless, research indicates that time perception is malleable, with social goals shifting in both younger and older individuals under imposed temporal constraints (Carstensen et al., 1999).

Concerning the sharply declining trajectories of purpose in life and personal growth—two eudaimonic aspects of well-being—it is important to underscore current societal challenges in offering older individuals meaningful roles and continued growth opportunities. Sociologists have labeled this issue "structural lag," referring to the disconnect where modern social institutions fail to keep pace with the additional years of life many individuals now enjoy (Riley et al., 1994). Aligning

with these ideas, Greenfield and Marks (2004) focused on older individuals who maintained few core roles. They found that those involved in formal volunteering have higher levels of purpose in life compared to those without core roles or volunteering experiences. This finding emphasizes Dowd's (1990) observation that opportunities for self-realization are not evenly distributed. Instead, they emerge through resource allocation, enabling only a subset of individuals to achieve life purpose.

A study conducted by LeFebvre and Huta (2021) further illuminated the changes in adults' motivations for pursuing well-being at various stages of adulthood, with notable differences observed between genders. The study revealed that among females, eudaimonic motivation increased until their 30s and remained relatively stable thereafter. In contrast, for males, eudaimonic motivation diminished from the 30s to the 40s but experienced an uptick from the 40s to the 60s. Regarding hedonic pleasure motivation, it saw a decrease from the 30s onwards for both genders, although males in their 20s registered significantly higher scores than females. Hedonic comfort motivation demonstrated little fluctuation, except for a decline observed from the 30s to the 50s in males. When examining extrinsic motivation, it declined for both genders until their 60s, although males in their 20s and 30s scored higher than their female counterparts. This research has thus showcased how motivations for well-being evolve over time, highlighting the marked variations observed between genders.

These investigations in lifespan psychology enhance our understanding of well-being, reinforcing the idea that the motivations driving it are dynamic, not static. These motives evolve throughout life and are further shaped by social and biological influences, presenting us with a richly complex, yet intriguing portrait of humanity's pursuit of well-being.

Chapter 2: Factors Influencing Psychological Well-being

In the previous chapter, we illustrated the two primary perspectives on well-being: the hedonic and the eudaimonic views. The hedonic approach highlights the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, while the eudaimonic perspective emphasizes the importance of self-realization and leading a life imbued with meaning.
In this chapter, we shall venture further, providing a more comprehensive examination of the various psychological processes previously introduced. Our focus will be on illuminating their connection and contribution to the multi-faceted concept of well-being.

2.1 Needs, Motivations and Well-being

In this chapter, our aim is to elucidate the pivotal factors contributing to the realization of well-being. This task involves examining the diverse perspectives proposed by authors we have previously cited, notably Ryff and Singer, Ryan and Deci, Maslow, Huta and Waterman, Peterson, and Diener. Understanding and differentiating their proposed factors leading to well-being relies heavily on how they define well-being itself. Indeed, their perspectives on the subject generally fall into one of four categories: they perceive well-being either as orientations (incorporating motives, priorities, values, and goals), behaviors, experiences, or functioning (LeFebvre & Huta, 2021).

Ryff and Singer belong to the latter group, considering well-being as a function of various elements. Their Psychological Well-being (PWB) model postulates six dimensions of well-being, which they distilled from prior philosophical and psychological perspectives on the good life. This endeavor to synthesize a unified framework spanned several years (Ryff, 1982, 1985, 1989b), with the intention of highlighting recurrent themes and points of convergence within the diverse definitions of positive functioning. These were especially influenced by Aristotle, Jahoda, Maslow, Rogers, Allport, Erikson, Neugarten, Jung, Norton, Russell, and Sartre. Furthermore, Ryff and Singer examined empirical research related to these qualities to underscore their scientific applicability.
The six dimensions, which form the backbone of their model, are:

1. Self-acceptance, a long-term self-evaluation that embodies awareness and acceptance of personal strengths and weaknesses. Individuals who demonstrate self-acceptance acknowledge and accept various facets of themselves, including both their good and bad qualities, and they cultivate a positive attitude toward their past life.

2. Personal growth, which is strongly tied to Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia, as it is explicitly concerned with the self-realization of the individual. This dimension is dynamic and involves a continual process of developing one's potential.
3. Purpose in life, which aligns closely with eudaimonia by drawing heavily on existential perspectives. Possessing a purpose in life implies having a sense of directedness, finding meaning in one's present and past life and having specific aims and objectives for living.
4. Environmental mastery, a unique aspect of well-being that emphasizes finding or creating an environment that suits one's personal needs and capacities. It involves having a sense of mastery and competence in managing one's environment, being able to control complex external activities, making effective use of surrounding opportunities, and choosing or creating contexts that align with personal needs and values.
5. Autonomy, which stresses self-determination, independence, and internal regulation of behavior. Despite being the most Western of all the above dimensions, Ryff and Singer acknowledge the need for diverse forms of wellness, including those that are more personal and individualistic, others that are more interpersonal and relational, and those reflecting capacities for deeply held purpose or for upholding the social order.
6. Positive relations with others, which involves the ability to form warm, satisfying, and trusting relationships and to demonstrate strong empathy, affection, and intimacy. This dimension is universally endorsed from a cultural perspective as a key feature of a well-lived life.

Ryff and Singer contend that these dimensions are not only interrelated but also mutually reinforcing (Ryff & Singer, 1998). The nurturing of all six dimensions within individuals and societies can, therefore, pave the way towards enhancing holistic well-being and fostering flourishing lives.

These facets of well-being have been associated with various psychological constructs in the realm of social sciences. These include identity status (Helson & Srivastava, 2001), personal goals (Carr, 1997; Riediger & Freund, 2004), and values (Sheldon, 2005). Together, these research endeavors underscore the elements that might influence positive functioning as conceptualized under the umbrella of eudaimonic well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Importantly, they also elucidate that the six factors proposed in the PWB model are unique entities, distinct from both values and motives.

While the PWB model suggests that the realization of these six dimensions can inspire individuals to seek psychological well-being, Ryff and Singer are careful to distinguish these dimensions from motivations. Moreover, although they do not expressly refer to "needs", we could see an inherent connection between needs and their component of well-being. For instance, the fulfillment of a need for meaningfulness could be conceived as the achievement of a sense of purpose in life.

In spite of the focus on the individual, Ryff and Singer maintain that both personal lives and societal order are enhanced by the embodiment of diverse facets of well-being. They advocate for the presence of multiple pathways to health, with individual lives embodying these vital elements in uniquely distinctive manners. Amid this diversity, they propose overarching categories of essential goods, which they believe, comprise the essence of an engaged life, and as such, represent fundamental ingredients of positive human health (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

But Ryff and Singer are not the only ones to place importance on autonomy and positive relations. Ryan and Deci also include these elements in their model. However, the intersection of ideas of autonomy expressed in the works of Ryff and Singer and Ryan and Deci is only partial.

While Ryff and Singer define autonomy as self-determination, independence, and internal regulation of behavior, Ryan and Deci (2000) define autonomy as implying self-determination and self-regulation, but this is quite different from the concept of independence. Independence means not relying on others, whereas the autonomy used in SDT means acting with the experience of choice. It's therefore possible to be autonomous (volitive) while still relying on others rather than acting independently from them. Thus, while the concept of autonomy as understood by PWB might be seen as antagonistic to relationship or community, within SDT, autonomy doesn't refer to being detached, but rather to the feeling of volition that can accompany any act, be it interdependent or independent. A study conducted on Korean and American samples indeed found a more positive relationship between autonomy and collectivist attitudes than between autonomy and individualist attitudes (Kim, Butzel, & Ryan, 1998). Furthermore, research has shown positive, rather than negative, links between parent-child relationships and autonomy in adolescents (Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Ryan et al., 1994). Therefore, it is clear that Ryan and Deci do not equate autonomy with independence or individualism.

But this isn't the only difference between the two models. While Ryff and Singer focus on the dimensions of well-being, treating motivation as a byproduct of realizing these dimensions, Ryan and Deci present a model of eudaimonia, which they regard as concerning the manner in which one lives their life, rather than the outcome of well-being itself. Naturally, they expect that living well should result in feelings of happiness and pleasure as well as a sense of meaning and fulfillment. But their focus is on the processes that represent eudaimonic life and generate well-being. Therefore, unlike PWB, for SDT, motivations and needs are fundamental.

The premise upon which Ryan and Deci based their work is that human beings possess intrinsic motivational tendencies. Relying also on evidence from developmental psychology, that have shown how, from birth, children, in their healthiest states, are active, curious, and engaged even in the absence of specific rewards (Harter, 1978). The construct of intrinsic motivation describes this natural

inclination towards mastery, spontaneous interest, and exploration, which is so essential for cognitive and social development and represents the primary source of pleasure and vitality throughout life (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993; Ryan, 1995). However, Ryan and Deci also note that maintaining this intrinsic propensity requires supportive conditions. Therefore, SDT does not delve into the causes of intrinsic motivation, which the authors regard as an evolved propensity (Ryan et al., 1997). Instead, it scrutinizes the conditions that spark and sustain, versus those that undermine and diminish, this inherent tendency. Through an inductive approach and empirical processes, Ryan and Deci have identified three fundamental psychological needs:

1. Competence: This refers to an individual's sense of efficiency, efficacy, and the ability to master various tasks and challenges. It is the feeling of being capable and able to navigate one's environment effectively.
2. Relatedness: This involves a deep sense of connection and intimacy with others who are important to us. It is not just about the quantity of interactions, but rather the quality of these relationships that enhances well-being. As noted by Nezlek (2000), well-being is more significantly predicted by the quality, rather than the quantity, of our interpersonal relationships.
3. Autonomy: This pertains to an individual's sense of volition, agency, and psychological freedom.

The satisfaction of these psychological needs appears to be essential for the achievement of intrinsic motivation, self-regulation analysis (which pertains to how people perceive social values and extrinsic contingencies and progressively transform them into personal values and motivations), health, and well-being. It's important to note that in their conception of eudaimonic well-being, Ryan and Deci include both psychological health and life satisfaction. However, they also acknowledge that not all conditions that foster SWB promote eudaimonic well-being (Nix, 1999; Ryan & Frederick 1997; Sheldon & Elliot 1999).

The significance of intrinsic motivation is by no means trivial; the question of whether individuals sustain behaviors due to their own interests and values or due to external factors bears great importance across all cultures (Johnson, 1993). In their 2004 research, Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, and Kasser indeed emphasized that both the orientation of goals (i.e., the content) and the underlying dynamic processes (i.e., the motivations) play significant roles. This research furnishes clear evidence that it is both "what is pursued and why it is pursued" that predicts an individual's well-being.

A comparison between individuals who exhibit authentic motivation and those who act predominantly under external control typically reveals that the former demonstrates more interest, excitement, and confidence. These qualities subsequently manifest as superior performance,

persistence, and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997), as well as increased vitality (Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999), self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1995), and overall well-being (Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995).

However, intrinsic motivation is not the only form of self-determined motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Contrary to some perspectives that consider extrinsically motivated behavior as invariably non-autonomous, SDT suggests that extrinsic motivation can vary greatly in its relative autonomy (Ryan & Connell, 1989; Vallerand, 1997). For this reason, within SDT, Ryan and Deci (1985) introduced a second sub-theory, the Organismic Integration Theory (OIT).

In the OIT, extrinsically motivated behaviors span the continuum between amotivation and intrinsic motivation, varying in the extent to which their regulation is autonomous. Extrinsically motivated behaviors that are less autonomous are defined as "externally regulated" and are performed to satisfy an external request or reward contingency. A second type of extrinsic motivation is so-called "introjected regulation", which involves the taking on of a regulation (i.e., to avoid feelings of guilt or anxiety or to attain ego enhancement) but not fully accepting it as one's own. A more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is "regulation through identification", which reflects a conscious valuing of a goal, accepted as personally important. Finally, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is "integrated regulation", which occurs when identified rules are fully assimilated to the self, meaning they have been brought into congruence with one's other values and needs. When people internalize regulations and assimilate them to the self, they experience greater autonomy in action.

Given the importance of internalization, Ryan and Deci sought to identify the social conditions that promote or inhibit internalization and integration. Since extrinsically motivated behaviors are typically not interesting, the primary reason people initially undertake such actions is that the behaviors are valued by significant others, which suggests that relatedness is important for internalization (Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994). The relative internalization of extrinsically motivated activities is also a function of perceived competence: people are more likely to adopt activities that valued social reference groups when they feel effective in those activities.

Finally, the experience of autonomy facilitates internalization and is a critical element for the integration of a regulation, which requires that the person grasp its meaning and synthesize it with other goals and values. This deep and holistic processing (Kuhl & Fuhrmann, 1998) is facilitated by a sense of choice, volition, and freedom from excessive external pressure to behave or think in a certain way. In this sense, autonomy-support allows individuals to actively transform values into their own. Therefore, the three fundamental needs identified seem to support internalization and integration.

Ryan and Deci also place great emphasis on social contexts. They believe that human beings can be proactive or passive largely as a function of the social conditions in which they operate, which can facilitate or hinder self-motivation and healthy psychological development. For this reason, they incorporate a sub-theory within SDT - the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) (1985). The CET posits that contextual social events leading to feelings of competence during action can enhance intrinsic motivation for that action (Deci, 1975). However, feelings of competence do not increase intrinsic motivation if not accompanied by a sense of autonomy (deCharms, 1968; Fisher, 1978; Deci et al., 1982). In addition, intrinsic motivation flourishes more readily in contexts characterized by a sense of security and relatedness (Bowlby, 1979; Frodi, Bridges, & Grolnick, 1985). Of course, many intrinsically motivated behaviors are happily performed in isolation, suggesting that proximal relational supports might not be necessary for intrinsic motivation. However, a secure relational base seems to be important for the expression of intrinsic motivation.

Thus, contexts that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness foster greater internalization and integration than do contexts that thwart the satisfaction of these needs. Excessive control, non-optimal challenges, and lack of connectedness, on the other hand, disrupt the intrinsic actualizing and organizing tendencies of nature, and thus such factors not only lead to lack of initiative and responsibility, but also to discomfort and psychopathology.

Indeed, the frustration of psychological needs entails more than just the mere deprivation of one's requirements (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013. In recent years, research has determined that psychological need satisfaction plays a critical role in individuals' growth and well-being. Conversely, need frustration has been found to be a strong predictor of individuals' problematic behavior and psychopathology (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Ryan and Deci define these three needs as innate, essential, and universal. However, it's important to underscore that this doesn't imply that their relative salience and their pathways of satisfaction are immutable across the lifespan or that their modes of expression are the same in all cultures. The very fact that needs satisfaction is facilitated by the internalization and integration of culturally endorsed values and behaviors suggests that individuals are likely to express their competence, autonomy, and relatedness differently within cultures with different values. Therefore, the hypothesis of universal psychological needs doesn't diminish the importance of variability in goals and orientations across different developmental epochs or different cultures but suggests similarities in the underlying processes leading to the development and expression of such differences.

Maslow's theory is another one that focuses on orientation, with his hierarchy of needs serving as a motivational theory. This model not only acknowledges the basic physical needs of humans but also

places significant emphasis on psychological needs and self-fulfillment. Maslow's hierarchy encompasses five levels of needs: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, individuals are driven to fulfil these needs in a sequential order, beginning with the most basic physiological needs, and ultimately leading to the need for self-actualization. Self-actualization is a state wherein individuals realize their full potential, achieving a sense of purpose and meaning. This framework posits that people are motivated by different needs, which can be organized in a hierarchy, with the lower-level needs requiring fulfillment before the higher-level needs can be addressed (Gorman, 2010).

Maslow's theory stands apart in that it establishes a hierarchy of needs, suggesting that some needs take precedence over others. Unlike other theories, it places physiological and safety needs at the foundation of well-being, emphasizing the importance of basic needs before considering higher-level psychological and self-fulfillment needs.

Huta (Huta & Waterman, 2014), like Ryan and Deci and Maslow, perceives well-being as an orientation, but Huta's model places greater emphasis on motivations rather than specific needs (Huta & Waterman, 2014). As detailed by Huta and Waterman, descriptions of the eudaimonic motivation are diverse, but they often encapsulate four concepts:

1. Authenticity: This involves seeking self-understanding and behaving in alignment with one's values and self-identity (Fowers et al. 2010; Huta 2015; Waterman 1993).
2. Excellence: This involves living with high moral standards and striving for higher quality in behaviors and accomplishments (Fowers 2005; Huta 2015; Waterman 1993).
3. Growth: This involves the pursuit of learning, self-actualization, and maturation as a human being (Bauer et al. 2008; Huta 2015; Waterman 2011).
4. Meaning: This involves seeking to understand and contribute to the big picture, building personal meaning and purpose (Huta 2015; Peterson et al. 2005; Wong 2012).

Furthermore, Huta does not view eudaimonia as a way of living and hedonia as the outcomes of well-being. Instead, she proposes that both can be conceptualized as orientations. In this context, she identifies three additional major well-being motivations apart from the eudaimonic ones (LeFebvre & Huta, 2021). These include Hedonic Motivation, which is further subdivided into:

1. Hedonic pleasure motivation (seeking pleasure, enjoyment, and fun)
2. Hedonic comfort motivation (seeking comfort, relaxation, ease, and freedom from pain)

In their study, LeFebvre & Huta also introduced Extrinsic Motivation, which they define as the pursuit of money, power, status, popularity, and image (Kasser & Ryan 1993, 1996; Schwartz 2012). They chose to include this aspect because, despite extrinsic motivations often being negatively associated

with personal well-being (Kasser & Ryan 1993, 1996, 2001; Sheldon et al. 2004; Vansteenkiste et al. 2004), it's worth studying alongside eudaimonic and hedonic motivations due to its prevalent pursuit by a large number of individuals (Bilsky et al. 2011; Kasser & Ryan 1993, 1996; Twenge et al. 2012). Therefore, they incorporated all four well-being motivations—eudaimonic, hedonic pleasure, hedonic comfort, and extrinsic—to evaluate a reasonably comprehensive set of ways people pursue a good life. But as expected, they found that extrinsic motivation are not fulfilling, especially as age increases.

While a study by Huta and Ryan (2010) demonstrated that eudaimonia and hedonia refer to different kinds of wellbeing that serve complementary roles in life. Hedonia relates more to immediate affective outcomes, disengagement from worries, and immediate results, while eudaimonia refers more to cognitive-affective feelings of meaning and appreciation, a sense of connection to a larger entity, long-term outcomes, and person-level outcomes. Their research demonstrated that a combination of eudaimonia and hedonia is correlated with maximum life satisfaction and well-being. People do not need to choose between hedonia and eudaimonia. Embracing both types of motivations is indeed associated with greater and more diversified wellbeing.

These findings align well with a 2005 study by Peterson, who sought to distinguish a full life from an empty one by measuring life satisfaction against three orientations: pleasure, meaning, and engagement. The orientation to pleasure did not emerge as a strong predictor of life satisfaction as the orientation to engagement or meaning; however, pleasure is not irrelevant. It adds value to a life rich in engagement and meaning and subtracts value from a life lacking these aspects. The study found these three orientations distinguishable but not incompatible, and each is individually associated with life satisfaction. Suggesting that a balanced approach to life that incorporates both hedonic and eudaimonic motivations can lead to the highest levels of wellbeing.

This notion is further corroborated by a study conducted by Giuntoli and colleagues (2021), which affirms that the simultaneous pursuit of both pleasure and eudaimonia can yield higher levels of well-being compared to a focus on either one in isolation. Utilizing the HEMA-R measurement tool, a methodology developed by Huta, these researchers were able to demonstrate that an orientation towards pleasure is linked to higher instances of positive experiences. On the other hand, an orientation towards eudaimonia showed strong associations with adaptive coping strategies, indicative of individuals striving for sustainable personal growth.

In contrast to theories that primarily focus on eudaimonic well-being (i.e., Ryff & Singer), Diener's model is solidly rooted in the hedonic tradition. Unlike previous theories, Diener views well-being

primarily as experiences and considers that the factors which can increase or decrease it are largely attributable to personality factors. Indeed, DeNeve (1999) suggested that subjective well-being is determined to a substantial degree by genetic factors and argued that it remains relatively stable throughout the lifespan. For example, of the "big five" traits (Costa & McCrae, 1992), DeNeve and Cooper reported that extraversion and agreeableness were consistently positively associated with subjective well-being, whereas neuroticism was consistently negatively associated with it. Diener and Lucas further suggest that conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience are less consistently linked to subjective well-being because these three traits are more influenced by environmental factors, whereas extraversion and neuroticism may be more influenced by genetic factors. However, this, though not explicitly mentioned by the authors, is not necessarily in opposition to previous theories. Indeed, Schmutte and Ryff (1997) have examined the relationship between the big five traits and multiple dimensions of PWB, finding that extraversion, conscientiousness, and low neuroticism were linked with eudaimonic dimensions of self-acceptance, mastery, and life purpose. Openness to experience was linked to personal growth; agreeableness and extraversion were linked to positive relationships; and low neuroticism was linked to autonomy. Therefore, while Diener's model doesn't directly address needs or motivations, it implies that fulfilling certain needs and motivations could contribute to life satisfaction and positive affect. Where these models truly diverge is in the universality of these motivations or needs. Diener asserts that subjective well-being inherently acknowledges the diversity of values, goals, and strengths among individuals. By allowing individuals to evaluate their life satisfaction based on their own values, goals, and circumstances, subjective well-being respects this individuality. While it is certainly important to explore whether the factors identified by Ryff and Singer of Ryan and Deci are universally applicable, it is equally important to recognize that their expression can and should be subjective, as each person possesses their own unique personality and motivations.

Furthermore, Diener argues that experiencing mastery, good health, and other factors does not guarantee that a person is free from feelings of depression and dissatisfaction with their life. However, what Diener may fail to recognize is that individuals might not perceive these universal needs as fulfilling because their expression is influenced by familial and cultural factors, rather than aligning with their authentic selves. Consequently, while these needs might be achieved, they may not be fully expressed or experienced in a manner that aligns with the individual's authentic self.

Overall, these theories range from those focusing more on dimensions of well-being (Ryff & Singer), to those that explicitly tie needs to motivations (Deci & Ryan), to those primarily view well-being in terms of a hierarchy of needs (Maslow). Other perspectives view well-being as an integration of

different types of motivation (Huta), or as a subjective assessment of life, (Diener). Collectively, these theories underscore the intricate nature of well-being, shedding light on the multitude of factors that contribute to it.

2.2 Culture, Self and Well-being

The exploration of well-being is intrinsically tied to the ongoing debate between cultural relativism and universal aspects of human nature (Ryff &Singer, 1998). This debate centers around the question of whether there is a single universally applicable definition of well-being or whether there are multiple forms, each fostered by different societal contexts and culturally distinct ways of life (Diener & Suh, 2000; Kitayama &Markus, 2000).

Even proponents of eudaimonic perspectives of well-being, such as Ryff and Singer, acknowledge that culture and context significantly influence an individual's perceptions and evaluations of positive aspects of life (1998). Therefore, the very definition of well-being raises cultural questions about the meaning and equivalency of constructs, especially when conducting cross-cultural studies aiming to identify systematic differences and similarities in well-being across varying social arrangements (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

A significant portion of the discussion in this field has focused on differentiating between independent and interdependent self-construal and societal structures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder, 1993; Triandis, 1989). Markus and Kitayama (1991, 2010) argue that there is a fundamental difference in the subjective organization of the self based on whether individuals have an independent or interdependent self-construal.

An independent self is defined by individual attributes, separate from relationships, with a consistent identity across different situations and fluid boundaries between ingroups and outgroups. On the other hand, an interdependent self is defined by relational characteristics, with its identity being fluid across situations as roles change and maintaining a clear distinction between ingroup and outgroup.

In their work, Markus and Kitayama (2010) posit that self-construal largely influenced multiple human domains: cognition, emotion, interpersonal relations, and motivation. For instance, individuals who view themselves as independent are likely to exercise their agency in expressing their inherent needs, asserting their rights, leveraging their abilities, and warding off undue societal pressure. Conversely, individuals who perceive themselves as interdependent tend to focus their agency on receptivity to others, accommodating their needs and expectations, and curbing their personal desires when needed.

Expanding on this, Cross, Hardin & Gercek-Swing (2011) argue that self-construal is intricately molded by the cultural norms, practices, and values individuals are immersed in. Cultures that prioritize individualism typically foster independent self-construal, endorsing uniqueness and self-dependence. In contrast, collectivist cultures emphasize the interdependent aspects of self, valuing relational bonds and group affiliations.

Cross-cultural studies of well-being have indeed research how culture shapes well-being or its constituents (Arrindell et al., 1997; Diener & Diener 1995; Kitayama et al., 2000; Oishi & Diener, 2001; Oishi et al., 1999). And given the considerable cultural variation resulted by these studies, some scholars question the existence of a universal conception of well-being (e.g., Christopher, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Christopher (1999) argues that the interpretation of well-being is inextricably linked to cultural contexts, and it is implausible to devise an evaluation of well-being free from cultural values. From Christopher's perspective, all conceptualizations of well-being are, at their core, moral visions, founded on individual perspectives about what it means to prosper.

Diener and Diener (1995) examined mean differences between nations regarding SWB and the differential correlates of well-being across nations. They discovered that self-esteem correlated with well-being across nations, but this relationship was stronger in individualistic countries. The association between SWB and satisfaction with wealth, friends, and family also varied by nation.

But Cross, Hardin and Gercek-Swing (2011) state that cultural norms, practices, and values are also influenced by the individual's self-concepts. The Culture-as-Situated Cognition theory (CSC) (Oyserman et al., 2014) posits that differences in self-construal are not fixed between groups but rather reflect a "cultural mindset" that is continuously accessible. Indeed, every society has practices that relate to either collectivistic or individualistic mindsets, suggesting that culture operates as a cognitive process. This is evidenced by research showing that cultural cues can be "primed", or made more accessible, affecting how we respond to subsequent stimuli. Therefore, cultural differences are flexible and vary more in degree than in type. Studies by Fischer and Schwartz (2011) provide evidence of minimal variability across countries, revealing more similarities than differences across cultures (Poortinga, 2015).

Moreover, the concept of culture, as outlined by Tajfel and Turner, is inherently linked to the notion of self. They define it as "a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and their membership within it" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). This definition not only explicates the ties between culture and self, but it also underscores the universal human need for belonging and social affiliation

(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The need to belong stems from our nature as social beings and is reflected in relationships such as parental attachment (Bowlby, 1969), indicating its roots in both our personal and evolutionary history (Brewer & Caporael, 2006). Social identity, which derives from our knowledge and emotional attachment to a social group, is thus a part of our self-concept (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Meanwhile, personal identity represents our unique characteristics shaped by personal motives and goals.

Taking the need for autonomy as an example, Devine, Camfield, and Gough (2008) has shown that although often considered a Western concept, its significance can be observed even in Eastern collectivist societies like Bangladesh. However, its expression can vary greatly depending on the cultural context. In societies where autonomy is not culturally valued, individuals may feel unable to express this need, which underscores the importance of careful assessment when understanding people's universal psychological needs. Even though certain needs may not be overtly endorsed due to cultural values, they remain crucial for individual well-being.

Consequently, it is important to clarify some misinterpretation around the concept of autonomy as proposed by SDT. Critics, such as Diener, have conflated autonomy, which is the feeling of self-endorsement or volition, with independence, which is non-reliance. This misinterpretation has affected research, with some cross-cultural psychologists (e.g., Markus et al., 1996; Diener & Lucas, 2000) incorrectly equating the two terms when discussing cultural differences. Autonomy and interdependencies can coexist (Ryan & Lynch 1989). Evidence from countries often labelled as collectivist, such as Japan, demonstrates that autonomy, as measured by SDT, is important in predicting student motivation and adjustment (Hayamizu, 1997). Further evidence comes from a study by Deci and colleagues (2001) which showed that the key needs identified by SDT significantly enhance the well-being of employees in culturally diverse settings, such as collectivist-oriented companies in Bulgaria and a sample of workers of the United States. These findings underscore the universal relevance of these needs and their contribution to well-being.

Critics also fail to acknowledge that although universal needs may be met, they might not be fully expressed or experienced in a way that aligns with individuals' authentic selves. This can be due to the influence of familial and cultural factors which could potentially mask these needs. Indeed, Deci and Ryan (2000) clarify that the universality of their three needs does not imply that "their relative salience and their avenues for satisfaction are unchanging across the life span or that their modes of expression are the same in all cultures. The very fact that need satisfaction is facilitated by the internalization and integration of culturally endorsed values and behaviors suggests that individuals are likely to express their competence, autonomy, and relatedness differently within cultures that hold different values. Indeed, the mode and degree of people's psychological-need satisfaction is theorized

to be influenced not only by their own competencies but, even more important, by the ambient demands, obstacles, and affordances in their sociocultural contexts. Thus, to posit universal psychological needs does not diminish the importance of variability in goals and orientations at different developmental epochs or in different cultures, but it does suggest similarities in underlying processes that lead to the development and expression of those differences" (p.75).

Therefore, SDT does not claim that fundamental needs are equally valued across all families, social groups, or cultures, but that thwarting these needs results in negative psychological outcomes in any social or cultural context. Given the subjective and individual nature of SWB, research on it will naturally focus on cultural differences. Considering this, we might view SWB as the phenotypic portion of overall well-being. This level of analysis it's critical, particularly for managing such differences. However, these distinctions should not be misconstrued as evidence against the existence of universal needs.

These two theoretical conceptions and empirical evidence simply operate on different levels. Eudaimonic theories focus more on deeper needs, that may manifest differently depending on individual traits, values, and cultural contexts, but which essence is universal.

Hence, beyond the various expressions of a need, research shows that what leads to well-being is whether people's goals are intrinsically motivated and thus, aligned with their true self. Eudaimonic theorists indeed regard emotional access and congruence as essential for well-being (Butzel & Ryan, 1997). The concept of self-awareness, therefore, is crucial, beyond the self-construal that we possess and its subsequent expression.

Self-concordant goals are those goals that align with one's true self and fulfill basic needs, originate from intrinsic or identified motivations and are thus well-internalized autonomously. Conversely, goals that are not self-concordant are tied to external or introjected motivation and either lack connection to or are indirectly tied to need fulfillment. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) show that although achieving a goal is associated with improve well-being, this effect is significantly less potent when the achieve goals are not self-concordant. Individuals who achieve more self-concordant goals have more need-satisfying experiences, which predict better well-being. Only goals endorsed by the self will enhance well-being; the pursuit of heteronomous goals, even if successful, will not. As such, the relative autonomy of personal goals has repeatedly been shown to predict well-being outcomes, accounting for goal efficacy on both inter-individual and intra-individual levels of analysis (Ryan & Deci 2000). Cross-cultural research has supported these findings, implying that the relative autonomy of one's endeavors matters, regardless of whether one is collectivistic or individualistic, male or female (e.g., Chirkov & Ryan 2001; Hayamizu 1997, Vallerand 1997). A study by Nix and colleagues (1999) demonstrated that successful goal pursuits led to happiness, but success also fostered vitality

only when the pursuits were autonomous. McGregor and Little (1998) suggested that the meaningfulness of goals is separate from goal efficacy, and they found that while perceived efficacy was linked to happiness, the relative integrity of goals was tied to meaningfulness.

Various philosophical and psychological perspectives converge indeed on the suggestion that a happy and meaningful life is the product of living in accordance with one's true self. The true self is an important construct in the historical theoretical tradition (Jung, 1953; Miller, 1979; Rogers, 1959; Winnicott, 1960), in which is seen as a set of innate and immutable characteristics that the individual must "discover" to live a fulfilling life. Similar ideas can be seen in contemporary trait theories emphasizing trait consistency throughout life (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1994) and the role of genetics in determining such traits (Bouchard, 2004).

However, the idea of a singular, immutable true self seems to conflict with the research highlighting the pervasiveness of environmental influences on the self. The SDT suggest that the true self is any aspect of the self that feels autonomous, internally driven, personally meaningful, and self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Numerous studies employing measures of authenticity (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993; Ryan, 1991; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997; Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995) have produced patterns with a wide range of well-being indicators, spanning from positive mood to physical symptoms. In a similar vein, self-reported authenticity within the context of romantic relationships is a significant correlate of relationship quality and duration, as well as overall well-being (e.g., Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006; Neff & Suzio, 2006). Research by Andersen and Williams (1985) has demonstrated that simply asking people to think about their true self yields positive outcomes. Similarly, Arndt, Schimel, and colleagues suggest that manipulations activating the true self, which they call the "intrinsic self," decrease a range of defensive expressions. For example, having participants visualize someone who accepts them unconditionally leads to reduced downward social comparison, distancing from another negative person, self-handicapping, and conformity (Arndt, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszcynski, 2001; 2002). Ryff and Singer (1998) defined life's meaning as a sense of having satisfying goals or purposes; people can derive meaning from a seemingly unlimited number of sources however, within each of these potential domains, people make choices between options that are not necessarily more objectively meaningful than others. Is the choice most consistent with one's true self to lead to a greater sense of meaning and satisfaction (Rogers, 1959). Supporting the notion that the true self is tied to a person's experience of meaning and satisfaction, Debats, Drost, and Hansen (1995) found that when participants were asked to write brief essays about a time they felt their life was meaningful and a time they felt it was insignificant, content analysis of the narratives revealed that meaningful

essays often included a sense of contact with oneself, while insignificant essays often entailed a sense of alienation from oneself.

Positive psychology's project underscores the imperative of self-knowledge. It posits that it is through comprehending an individual's own being that they can unlock their full potential and foster their innate strengths (Caprara & Cervone, 2003).

When individuals are attuned to their true selves, so they are knowledgeable about their motivations, desires, and character, they are in a better position to flourish and ultimately to achieve a state of well-being that transcends cultural boundaries (Caprara & Cervone, 2003).

The insights drawn from the literature, notably Ghorbani and colleagues (2008) cross-cultural study, underscore the universally acknowledged importance of self-knowledge for human flourishing. Referred to as "integrative self-knowledge," this process demands the consolidation of past experiences and future aspirations into a continuous narrative that can guide the individual's life. Implicit in this definition is the assumption that a self tries to maintain a coherent life story by integrating the present into a seamless narrative that stretches from the past towards a hoped-for future (e.g., McAdams, 1999).

In conclusion, well-being is intrinsically linked with the alignment of the self's true nature and one's understanding of it. Self-knowledge, and the ability to self-reflect, thus becomes an indispensable factor in cultivating well-being across various cultural contexts.

2.3 Mindfulness and Well-being

An individual characteristic related to psychological well-being is mindfulness. Numerous studies have indeed suggested that a mindful stance is correlated with psychological well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Dekeyser et al., 2008; Rasmussen & Pidgeon, 2011) and that it also acts as a protective factor against psychological distress.

The concept of mindfulness has its roots in Eastern spiritual traditions, especially in Buddhist meditation practices (Mace, 2008), in which attention and awareness are actively cultivated. Mindfulness is defined as the ability to focus attention on experiences occurring in the present moment in a non-judgmental and accepting manner (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). As Kabat-Zinn (1990) point out, mindfulness is the antithesis of mind-blindness, the tendency to behave in an automatic and mechanical way, as if on "autopilot".

At the heart of mindfulness is a change in perspective that has been referred to as "reperceiving" (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin & Freedman, 2006), "decentering" (Teasdale, Segal, Williams, Soulsby & Lau, 2000), metacognitive knowledge (Teasdale, 1999), or "deautomatization" (Safran & Segal, 1990). This involves a distancing process whereby one learns to experience thoughts, feelings, and

emotions as transient mental events, allowing the experience of reality to unfold in the present and thus be considered from various perspectives. Being "mentally present" therefore means being aware of and accepting one's activities and mental states, as they reveal themselves in the moment.

Mindfulness can be distinguished from other forms of self-awareness, which define self-consciousness in terms of self-knowledge (Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Carver & Scheier, 1981). While traditional forms of self-awareness share an inherent cognitive and intellectual foundation (Baumeister, 1999), mindfulness is a "pre-reflective" concept, as its basis is perceptual and non-evaluative. Rather than generating mental accounts about the self, mindfulness "offers a bare display of what is happening" (Shear & Jevning, 1999, p. 204).

The analysis of Bohlmeijer et al. (2011) revealed a five-facet model of mindfulness:

1. Observing, defined in terms of noticing or paying attention to sensory stimuli primarily coming from external sources and the body, along with their associated cognitions and emotions.
2. Describing, defined in terms of labeling internal experiences with words.
3. Acting with awareness, defined in terms of sustained attention and awareness of current activity and experience (as opposed to acting on autopilot).
4. Non-judging of inner experience, defined in terms of assuming a non-evaluative stance towards one's own thought and emotional processes while focusing on inner experiences, rather than adopting a critical stance.
5. Non-reactivity to inner experience, defined in terms of allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go, especially when distressing, without getting caught up or dragged away by them.

Mindfulness has attracted considerable attention from the scientific community since the introduction of mindfulness-based stress reduction programs by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1980s. Mindfulness-based interventions have empirically shown benefits for various human functions in different contexts and populations (Creswell, 2017). These interventions include mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques, adapted from Kabat-Zinn's work (1982; 1990), Linehan's dialectical behavior therapy for borderline personality disorders (1993), acceptance and commitment therapy (Hayes et al. 1999), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy Segal et al. 2002), and other variations of these methods.

But mindfulness can be understood not only as a practice of attention, central to Buddhist meditation (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006) and mindfulness training programs (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), but also as an individual trait. Dispositional mindfulness is the tendency to think, feel, and act with open and receptive awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). It encompasses both the self-regulation of attention on the present moment and an open, non-judgmental orientation to experiences, which are accepted without judgment or alteration (Bishop et al., 2004). These characteristics of mindfulness indicate its

potential connections with the six dimensions of PWB (Wallace & Shapiro 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that mindfulness has been found to be positively correlated with psychological well-being, both as a single construct obtained from the collaboration of the six dimensions (Baer et al., 2008), and in each dimension taken individually (Bergin & Pakenham 2016; Bravo et al., 2016).

One of the ways mindfulness promotes greater well-being is through non-attachment. Non-attachment is defined as "a flexible and balanced way of relating to one's experiences without clinging to or suppressing them" (Sahdra et al., 2015, p. 2). Sahdra and colleagues (2015) outlined that those who are more non-attached tend to free themselves from fixation on egocentric beliefs and unhealthy thoughts and feelings. Studies have shown that non-attachment is associated with better well-being, fewer psychological disorders (Sahdra et al., 2010), more prosocial behaviors (Sahdra et al., 2015) and better interpersonal functioning (Sahdra et al., 2010). Non-attachment is an outcome of mindfulness practice (Sahdra et al., 2016). Indeed, Whitehead and colleagues (2019) demonstrated the mediating role of non-attachment in the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being.

In Buddhism, mindfulness and the recognition of interconnectedness are parts of the Eightfold Path, where each path mutually supports the others in lifting people from suffering through the promotion of non-attachment attitudes (Bodhi, 2010). Therefore, non-attachment, besides mindfulness, is linked to another central principle at the base of all Buddhist teachings: interconnectedness. This concept outlines the interdependent nature of all world phenomena, implying that the rise of all things is conditioned by the rise of one another (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 1995). Interconnectedness can be operationally defined as the awareness that the existence of all world phenomena is the result of the fulfillment of various causes and conditions, in which no entity can sustain itself independently without relying on other factors.

Interconnectedness lays the groundwork for other Buddhist teachings to comprehend the origins of suffering and the ways to eradicate it (Payutto, 1994), and to understand the interrelationships among all sentient beings. According to traditional Buddhist teachings, suffering originates when individuals, believing in the existence of an independent "self" or "I", cling to things such as self-images, goals, experiences, or people that are desirable to them (Ekman et al., 2005). Yet, given that everything can change at any moment, as dictated by the principle of interconnectedness, clinging to objects under the illusion that they are constant and isolated entities is inevitably bound to result in suffering (Van Gordon et al., 2015c).

The idea that suffering derives from clinging to one's sense of self is also found within psychological theories. For instance, Higgins' self-discrepancy theory (1987) posits that negative emotions can stem from the disparity between the actual self and the ideal self. Beyond personal discomfort that can

result from self-attachment, social distress can also ensue. Social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) states that this process often leads to group favoritism, where in-group members are evaluated more favorably than out-group members (Brewer, 1979). These biases can lead to a rupture of collective well-being and social harmony (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014).

On the other hand, realizing interconnectedness leads to the awareness that all phenomena are subject to change (Sik, 2010). Objects do not exist independently and permanently; understanding this allows individuals to liberate themselves from all forms of clinging, including attachment to their own sense of self.

A study by Yu and colleagues (2020) examined the relationship between interconnectedness, non-attachment, and mindfulness, analyzing their relationships with various indicators of well-being. It emerged that non-attachment is a significant mediator for both mindfulness and interconnectedness on various well-being indicators. Interconnectedness also turned out to have significant incremental value compared to mindfulness and non-attachment, especially on social justice ideologies. This means that it is therefore a distinct concept from mindfulness and non-attachment, and it can further explain well-being and social justice ideologies thanks to the fact that more interconnected people tend to shift attention from self to the collective (self-transcendence), detach from any entity they initially desire (non-attachment), and are more motivated to alleviate people's pain (compassion).

Shapiro and colleagues (2006) hypothesized that mindfulness indirectly influences well-being by inducing a perspective shift that allows individuals to contemplate their own experiences without becoming fully immersed in them. The authors suggested that four mechanisms derived from this process have an impact on well-being: self-regulation, values clarification, cognitive and behavioral flexibility, and exposure (i.e., the tendency not to avoid negative emotional states and stress). Empirical tests of this model (Brown et al., 2015; Carmody et al., 2009; Pearson et al., 2015) have demonstrated that this "decentering" can be a cognitive mediator in the link between mindfulness and purpose in life and environmental mastery, two of the six dimensions postulated by Ryff and Singer. The literature also suggests other partial mediators in the link between mindfulness and well-being, including emotional intelligence (Schutte & Malouff, 2011), inhibitory capacities directed towards actions and emotions (Sauer et al., 2011), resilience (Bajaj & Pande, 2016), self-esteem (Bajaj et al., 2016), hope, optimism (Malinowski & Lim, 2015), and recently attention has also been given to more emotion-related mechanisms, related to the heart. In fact, some research (Brown et al., 2015; Shapiro et al., 2006; Voci, Veneziani, & Fuochi, 2018) has shown that "heartfulness" plays a fundamental role in the relationship between mindfulness and well-being. Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines heartfulness as the warm, gentle, and caring side of mindfulness.

In the practice of mindfulness, awareness and attention to the present moment are not cold or analytical but involve an "affectionate attention," accompanied by "an attitude of gentleness and compassion" (Kabat-Zinn & Davidson, 2012, p. 79). Many Asian languages use the same word for mind and heart, suggesting that mindfulness and heartfulness should be considered synonymous or at least closely related concepts (Kabat-Zinn 2009; Santorelli 1999).

Two variables representing this quality combine a caring attitude with aspects of awareness (Voci, Veneziani & Fuochi, 2018). The first is self-compassion, a caring attitude towards oneself. According to Neff (2003), self-compassion involves three interrelated components:

1. self-kindness, a non-critical attitude towards oneself, embracing one's own limitations
2. common humanity, the tendency to see personal difficulties as part of a wider human experience
3. mindfulness, in this context considered as a balanced awareness of painful thoughts and experiences, without excessive identification with them

However, the mindfulness component of self-compassion does not coincide with the broad construct of mindfulness; the former refers to the ability to maintain mental balance while facing stressful situations, the latter includes many other skills (e.g., attention, non-judgment, acceptance, openness). Self-compassion can be seen as a consequence of heartfulness, as awareness and attention to the present moment are accompanied by a compassionate and kind attitude towards the objects of experience, including the self (Baer et al. 2012; Kabat-Zinn 2003). Several studies suggest that self-compassion can be one of the potential mechanisms through which mindfulness is correlated with well-being (e.g., Hollis-Walker & Colosimo 2011).

Indeed, since self-compassion involves the acceptance of personal limitations and external conditions, a sense of community with all other human beings, and trust in one's beliefs and values, it mediates the relationship between mindfulness and self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, and autonomy (Voci, Veneziani & Fuochi, 2018).

The second variable that plays an important role in the relationship between mindfulness and well-being is gratitude: the generalized tendency to recognize and respond with gratitude to the role of others' benevolence in our positive experiences and outcomes (McCullough et al. 2002, p. 112). Gratitude can also be considered a consequence of heartfulness, as awareness of the interdependence between oneself and others is part of mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn & Davidson, 2012), and this awareness is a prerequisite for gratitude (Algoe, 2012). Several studies have found a positive association between gratitude and well-being (e.g., Emmons & Mishra, 2011; Wood et al., 2009). Indeed, since gratitude implies appreciation of the positive and significant aspects of one's life, recognizing the importance of other individuals and one's social environment, we expected that a

disposition towards gratitude would mediate the association between mindfulness and self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, and environmental mastery (Voci, Veneziani & Fuochi, 2018).

2.4 Materialism and Well-being

The question, "does money bring happiness?" might seem trivial. However, it is crucial to delve into it, as its underlying layers are more complex than they appear.

As indicated in a review by Diener and Diener (2001), large correlations exist between the wealth of a Nation and the average SWB within them. However, this correlation should not lead to infer that an increase in material goods will unconditionally enhance well-being. Indeed, many studies reveal that the economic growth over the recent decades in most economically developed societies has been accompanied by minimal increases in SWB (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Furthermore, increases in individual income do not typically result in increased SWB. Thus, these findings corroborate Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which posits that before higher-level needs can be met, basic physical needs must be fulfilled.

However, some studies suggest the reality is even less straightforward. The discrepancy in happiness levels between wealthy and poor countries is not just due to the satisfaction of basic needs but also encompasses psychological needs. National poverty not only interferes with satisfying physical needs but can also inhibit the ability to exercise competencies, pursue interests, and maintain relationships, all of which contribute to psychological need satisfaction.

A nation's poor infrastructure can limit opportunities for stable relationships, personal expressiveness, and productivity. This would explain why within poorer nations, the value of money for satisfying needs may be more critical than it is within a nation where most citizens have access to basic resources to pursue their goals (Ryan & Deci, 2001). A study by Bradshaw and colleagues (2023) shows that living in a society that offers broad freedoms, equal opportunities, and fair resource distribution promotes the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, which in turn is associated with increased psychological well-being. Sen (1999), a Nobel laureate in economics, argues that freedom is a more rational goal for national development than gross national product per se. Her analysis shows that in cultures where relative freedoms have been expanded, both quality of life and economic growth are enhanced. Similarly, a study by Frey and Stutzer (1999) using a large sample of Swiss citizens revealed that economic wealth was a weak determinant of well-being. In contrast, citizens actively participating in democratic processes demonstrated higher levels of well-being, suggesting that the freedoms typically associated with economic prosperity play a more critical role in enhancing well-being.

Wilkinson & Pickett's research (2009; 2019) argues that economic growth does not necessarily result in a happier, healthier, or more successful population. In affluent societies, a smaller wealth gap between the rich and the poor correlates with a happier, healthier, and more successful population. However, some studies suggest that there is a difference in well-being between the rich and the poor within wealthy societies, possibly due to social comparisons. Ryff et al. (1999) studied the impact of impoverishment on eudaimonic outcomes. Using the PWB measure, they found that socio-economic status correlated with self-acceptance, purpose, mastery, and growth. Many of the adverse effects of lower socio-economic status on these dimensions appeared to result from social comparison processes, where poorer individuals unfavorably compared themselves to others and felt unable to secure resources that could rectify perceived inequalities.

Indeed, once the point of satisfying both physical and psychological primary needs is reached at the national or individual level, an increase in wealth does not lead to an increase in well-being (Diener & Diener, 2001). Within-nation differences in wealth show only small positive correlations with happiness and increases in personal wealth do not typically result in increased happiness. Once a person surpasses the poverty level and thereby secures sustenance and security, the acquisition of further wealth adds little to their well-being. Conversely, attaining goals deeply connected to the basic psychological needs should directly enhance well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; 1996).

Several studies have supported this model, indicating that the more people focus on financial and materialistic goals, the lower their well-being. This result has been confirmed in developed countries such as the United States and Germany (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Schmuck et al., 2000), as well as in less economically developed nations like Russia and India (e.g., Ryan et al., 1999). Both cross-sectional (Ryan et al., 1999) and longitudinal (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998) studies suggest that while progress toward intrinsic goals enhances well-being, progress toward extrinsic goals like money either does not enhance well-being or does so to a lesser extent.

Materialism, as commonly understood, is a mindset that places great emphasis on the acquisition and possession of objects, making these a central focus of one's life. This focus on possession and acquisition often goes beyond the immediate, influencing a person's attitudes, judgments, and comparisons in a variety of contexts and situations. This all-pervasive role of materialism in a person's life is quite akin to the role of core values, as defined by Rokeach (1973). Just as a value, according to Rokeach, materialism is an enduring belief that influences and guides actions across specific objects and situations, transcending immediate goals to influence more ultimate ones. Materialists often subscribe to a belief that happiness and satisfaction in life are inextricably tied to the possession of things. This forms the crux of their life philosophy, leading to a lifestyle where a high level of material consumption becomes a guiding goal, lending meaning to life and a sense of purpose to

everyday endeavors (Richins & Dawson, 1992). In comparing popular and theoretical notions of materialism, Richins and Dawson (1992) identified three prevalent conceptions of materialism. The first one is “acquisition centrality”, meaning that materialists place goods and their procurement at the heart of their lives. Materialism bestows meaning on life and provides a purpose for daily endeavors (Daun, 1983). According to Bredemeier and Toby (1960), materialists worship things, and the pursuit of possession supersedes religion in structuring their lives and guiding their behaviors. The second conception perceives acquisition as the “pursuit of happiness”, where goods and their attainment, seen as essential for well-being, become central to the lives of materialists (Belk, 1984; Ward & Wackman, 1971). Although most individuals are likely engaged to some extent in the quest for happiness, it is the pursuit of happiness through acquisition, rather than through other means such as personal relationships, experiences, or achievements, that distinguishes materialism. Finally, “success defined by possession” suggests that materialists tend to gauge their own and others' success based on the quantity and quality of possessed goods (Rassuli & Hollander, 1986; Heilbroner, 1956). The value of goods does not only stem from their ability to confer status (Veblen, 1953) but also from their capacity to project a desired self-image and denote participation in an idealized lifestyle (Campbell, 1987). Materialists perceive themselves as successful to the extent that they can possess products projecting these desired images.

So why do people persist in pursuing materialistic values even if it leads to lower well-being? As we have previously discussed, materialism is a value and, like every other value, its formation is heavily influenced by the surrounding environments. These environments include aspects such as parenting styles, parental values, socio-economic conditions of the family, and the neighborhood in which one lives, among other factors.

A study by Kasser and colleagues (1995) demonstrates that having cold and controlling mothers may lead individuals to believe that their worth depends on external sources. On the other hand, warm maternal environments that foster autonomy can facilitate the development of prosocial values and self-acceptance, nourishing the needs for growth, self-expression, and love. Along the same lines, Deci and Ryan suggested that warm, autonomy-promoting parents fulfill their children's fundamental needs, facilitating the development of an "organismic self-core." Conversely, cold and controlling parents force individuals to give up autonomy to maintain safety or approval.

Concerning socio-economic factors that can influence acquired values, it was found that mothers with lower socio-economic status and higher value on conformity may instill in their children the belief that adhering to others' demands is more important than following their desires. This can lead them to perceive financial success as more important than other values. Moreover, humanistic theorists like Rogers and Maslow argue that when parents do not provide a safe and supportive environment,

children neglect their desires to maintain security. This strong need for security might later manifest as an attempt to achieve financial success.

An external social factor influencing value development is the neighborhood in which individuals live. Many individuals from degraded environments might view conformity as necessary for job security and financial success as a means of escape. Therefore, they might give excessive importance to money in their value system, at the expense of more prosocial values.

Also the culture exerts immense influence on individuals' behavior, beliefs, and values (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Sameroff, 1987; Sameroff & Fiese, 1990; B. Schwartz, 1990). For example, the American culture encourages individuals to aspire to financial success and to value family, community, and personal growth. However, recent empirical research suggests a tension between these materialistic and prosocial values.

Richins and Dawson (1992) found that the more people appreciate materialism, the less they appreciate warm relationships with others. Kasser and Ryan (1993) demonstrate that late adolescents show lower well-being when aspirations for financial success is highly valued compared to aspirations for self-acceptance, affiliation, or community sense. LeFebvre and Huta (2021) found that in males, who are traditionally expected by society to aspire for financial success, there was a significant drop in well-being from the mid-30s to mid-40s. However, there was recovery from the mid-40s onwards, potentially because they begin to realize that internalized pressures are not fulfilling for them. They may then find ways to move forward, reflecting a shift in in values with life experience.

Another interesting factor that could lead people to pursue material goals is luxury consumption, which could be particularly appealing for materialistic consumers as they use their possessions as a signal of success, to construct their identity and as a pathway to happiness (Hudders &Pandelaere, 2012). Hudders and Pandelaere demonstrate that certain aspects of luxury consumption can reinforce materialism and leades to an improvement in SWB. In the short term, luxury consumption could potentially alleviate some of the negative consequences of materialism on SWB. However, the positive impact of luxury consumption on mood does not necessarily mean that a single luxury purchase can sustain this mood elevation for an extended period. It is more plausible that frequent luxury purchases provide frequent, brief mood enhancements. Given individuals' strong preference for immediate gratification, they highly value these short-lived rewards (O'Donoghue & Rabin, 2000). Hyperbolic discounting theory posits that individuals often favor minor, immediate rewards, even if these hinder long-term goal attainment (Dittmar and Bond2010; Laibson1998; Thaler1981). Such immediate gratifications are incredibly motivating, frequently jeopardizing our potential to

garner more substantial long-term rewards (Winkler2006). This mindset may incite detrimental behaviors that offer short-term pleasure but ultimately deviate the individual from lasting happiness.

In conclusion, is undeniably that economic prosperity can facilitate the fulfillment of universal human needs, both physical and psychological. However, it is paramount to discern between utilizing wealth as a facilitative tool and pursuing it as an ultimate goal. The latter leads into the realm of materialism, which invariably distances individuals from intrinsic motivations and universal needs. This misdirection in turn, as the evidence suggests, engenders a decrement in overall well-being. Thus, within the quest for well-being, striking a balanced approach towards wealth and material possessions is not just desirable, but essential.

Chapter 3: Method

3.1 Aim

The primary aim of this research is to examine the relationships between various types of psychological well-being and key psychological processes, with a particular focus on self-knowledge and mindfulness. Additionally, we have investigated the potential mediating effects of needs satisfaction and frustrations within these relationships.

Based on the literature reviewed in previous chapters, we hypothesize that the ability to develop and maintain mindful awareness, and to cultivate self-knowledge, will contribute to higher levels of both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being and lower levels of perceived stress.

Specifically, we postulate a connection between mindfulness practices and related constructs, such as non-attachment, and well-being, especially concerning the management of affective and cognitive aspects of well-being. On the other hand, we hypothesize that self-knowledge will have stronger relations with eudaimonic well-being and weaker relations with cognitive well-being.

Building upon SDT, we argue that motivation types are intricately connected to the dichotomy of satisfaction versus frustration of fundamental psychological needs. In this context, we theorize that individuals who have cultivated a deeper understanding and a more defined sense of self are likely to experience a higher degree of satisfaction in fulfilling basic psychological needs, particularly autonomy. We also expect these individuals to experience less frustration. This higher level of needs satisfaction and reduced frustration, in turn, should correlate positively with overall well-being.

Likewise, we also hypothesize that mindfulness and its related constructs will have an association with needs satisfaction, particularly competence, as the focus inherent in these practices could be linked to greater success and fewer failures in achieving set goals.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this research, belonging to the Italian population, were recruited on a voluntary basis through the distribution of a direct link via email and social media platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook) in May 2023. The online questionnaire was completed by 222 subjects, comprising 122 females (55%) and 99 males (45%). The age of the participants ranges from 18 to 84 years, with a mean age of 46.01 years (SD = 15.99).

Participants were asked to indicate their level of education and current occupation. With regard to the level of education, 139 participants (63%) have pursued studies up to a First Level Master's degree/Second Level Master's degree/Ph.D., 50 participants (23%) hold a High School diploma, 27 participants (12%) possess a Bachelor's degree, and 6 participants (3%) have a Middle School diploma.

To assess the various professions, a 9-level scale was employed. Each level was defined based on different criteria, including the type of work (manual or office-based), employment status (employee or self-employed), and, in the case of self-employment, whether it was conducted individually or with employees. The coding of professions also considered the accompanying educational qualifications associated with each occupation, providing a comprehensive assessment beyond mere economic factors, encompassing social prestige and associated lifestyle considerations.

The 9-level scale is divided into three main categories. The lower level, typically associates with completion of compulsory education, includes code 1, which encompasses manual labor jobs, and code 2, which consists of specialized employees, both in the public and private sectors (e.g., waiters, chefs), or self-employed without employees. The middle level, coded as 3 and 4, includes individuals with a middle school diploma or a high school diploma. Code 3 comprises small business owners (self-employed artisans with employees traders, bar or restaurant managers), as well as employed workers (nursery assistants, firefighters). On the other hand, code 4 encompasses small business entrepreneurs (real estate agents, insurers) and more specialized employed workers (computer programmers, employees with managerial roles, nursery, primary school teachers). The higher level, indicated by codes 5 and 6, is typically associated with a university degree, possibly accompanied by further specialization. Code 5 includes people as veterinarians, psychologists, advertisers, journalists, medium-sized business owners, employed pharmacists, middle/high school teachers. Code 6 comprises professions such as lawyer, doctor, architect, engineer, psychotherapist, notary, certified public accountant, magistrate, university professor, bank director, and senior executive. Code 7 is assigned to retirees or unemployed individuals, code 9 to students and Ph.D. students, and code 0 to homemakers.

Among the participants, it was found that 3 individuals have the occupation code 0, indicating they are houseworkers. Additionally, 5 participants have been assigned the code 2, representing Lower-higher level occupations, while 5 participants have been assigned the code 3, indicating Middle-lower level occupations. Furthermore, 26 participants have been categorized with the code 4, signifying Middle-higher level occupations. The code 5 has been assigned to 79 participants, representing Upper-lower level occupations, while 51 participants have been assigned the code 6, indicating Upper-higher level occupations. Moreover, 11 participants are classified with the code 7, representing

retirees or unemployed individuals, and 35 participants have been assigned the code 9, denoting students. Additionally, 7 participants did not specify their occupation.
In the final section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to report their experience in the field of awareness practices. Out of the total sample, 44 subjects reported practicing or having practiced Meditation, 26 reported practicing or having practiced Mindfulness, and 33 reported engaging in Other awareness-related practices. Overall, the data revealed that 152 participants are familiar with awareness practices, while the remaining 70 participants have no experience with them.

3.3 Measures

The instrument used for this research is a self-report online questionnaire. The administration of the questionnaire took place through Google Forms and required approximately 25-30 minutes to complete. Prior to starting the survey, participants were assured of the anonymity of their answers and the option to withdraw from the survey at any time.
The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The introductory section collects sociodemographic information such as gender, age, level of education, and current occupation. The main body of the questionnaire consists of 13 scales used to measure the constructs of interest. Finally, the last section includes questions regarding participants' experience with awareness practices or disciplines, such as Meditation, Mindfulness, and others, along with their respective durations.
The measurement scales employed in the questionnaire are as follows:

- Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire Short Form – FFMQ (Bohlmeijer et al., 2011; italian version by Giovannini et al., 2014)
  This is a shortened version of the 39-item Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, which has been developed as a comprehensive instrument for assessing the five facets of mindfulness. The scale consists of 24 items, divided into five subscales corresponding to the facets of mindfulness:
    - FFMQ Non-reactivity: defined as the ability to allow thoughts and feelings to come and go without becoming caught up in or carried away by them.
    - FFMQ Observe: defined as the capacity to notice or pay attention to both internal and external experiences.
    - FFMQ Act with awareness: defined as the ability to be fully present and attentive to one's activities in the present moment.
    - FFMQ Describe: defined as the skill of labeling or describing internal experiences using words.

- FFMQ Non-judging: defined as adopting a non-evaluative stance toward one's thoughts and feelings.

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each statement reflects their personal experience. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never or very rarely true) to 5 (very often or always true).

- Psychological Well-Being – PWB (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Italian version by Ruini et al., 2003)

  Psychological well-being was measured by the Italian version of the Psychological Well-Being Scale, an 18-item self-report questionnaire that evaluates the six dimensions of psychological well-being according to the theoretical model by Ryff and Keyes: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, and positive relations. Each statement was rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (totally agree).

- Psychological Entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004; Italian version by Boin & Voci, 2019)

  Psychological entitlement, a "general belief" that one deserves preferences, and more than others do, was measured by a 9-item self-report questionnaire. The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 7 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."

- Satisfaction with life scale – SWLS (Diener et al., 1985)

  The Satisfaction with life scale is a 5-item scale designed to measure global life satisfaction, one of the main components of subjective well-being. The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 7 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."

- Non-attachment Scale – NAS (Sahdra et al., 2010)

  This 7-item scale is designed to assess the Buddhist notion of "non-attachment," which refers to the ability to release oneself from mental fixations. The items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 6 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."

- Material Values Scale (Richins, 2004)

  The Materialism Scale is designed to assess materialism, conceptualized by Richins and Dawson (1992): as a value that influences the way that people interpret their environment and structure their lives. They conceptualize material values as encompassing three domains: the use of possessions to judge the success of others and oneself, the centrality of possessions in a person's life, and the belief that possessions and their acquisition lead to happiness and life satisfaction. The MVS contains 18 items that constitute three subscales designed to tap into each of these domains:

- Materialism Success
- Materialism Centrality
- Materialism Happiness

Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never or very rarely true) to 5 (very often or always true).

- Five motives in life scale – FMLS

  The Five Motives in Life Scale is a newly developed tool designed to explore diverse facets of life motives. The scale examines five motives, each of which elucidates a unique aspect of life's objectives:

  - FMLS Meaning: identified as the quest for purpose and significance in life, a concept that closely aligns with eudaimonic well-being. It reflects ideas presented by Peterson in his article "Orientation to Happiness" (Peterson, 2005)
  - FMLS Pleasure: it aligns with the hedonic perspective on well-being, emphasizing the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyable experiences. It reflects ideas as well presented by Peterson in his article "Orientation to Happiness" (Peterson, 2005)
  - FMLS Rich Life: it extends beyond the classical division of hedonism and eudaimonism, suggesting a life that is fulfilling and abundant in experiences and accomplishments.
  - FMLS Serenity: this motive refers to the aspiration for a peaceful, untroubled life free from worry and distress, which can be associated with the hedonic well-being concept of as ataraxia
  - FMLS Self-realization: as it emphasizes personal growth, self-fulfillment, and the actualization of one's potential. The connection of this motive to eudaimonism is further discussed in Guta's article on the HEMA scale (Huta, 2016).

  Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each statement may apply to them. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Not at all similar to me) to 5 (very similar to me).

- Perceived Stress Scale – PSS (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983)

  The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a 10-item measure used to assess the extent to which individuals perceive situations in their lives as stressful. Participants are asked to reflect on their feelings and thoughts during the last month and indicate the frequency with which they experienced each described feeling or thought. The response scale ranges from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often).

- Self-Construal Scale Independent self – SCS (15 item, revised version; Singelis, 1994/1999)

To measure participants' level of independent self-construal, a shortened version of the Self-Construal scale consisting of 10 items was utilized. The original scale, developed by Singelis in 1994, comprises 30 items divided into two subscales, aiming to measure the two types of self-construal: independent and interdependent. In the original scale, 15 items assess the extent to which respondents perceive themselves as separate, unique, and independent from others, while the remaining 15 items gauge the degree to which they perceive themselves as connected, similar, and interdependent with others.

Participants rated their agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "Strongly Disagree" and 7 representing "Strongly Agree."

- Self-Compassion Scale Short form (Raes et al., 2011; from Neff, 2003, Italian version by Veneziani, Fuochi e Voci, 2017)

  As a measure of self-compassion, we utilized the Italian translation (Veneziani et al., 2017) of the 12 items from the Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form (Raes et al., 2011). This scale is based on Neff's conceptualization of self-compassion, which encompasses three fundamental aspects: self-kindness vs. self-judgment, common humanity vs. isolation, and mindfulness vs. over-identification. Consistent with the recommendations of the original authors, a single total score was computed. The scale aims to capture individual differences in the ability to exhibit self-compassionate behaviors in everyday life. Respondents rated each item on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).

- Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale – BPN (Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2020; Italian version by Costa et al., 2018)

  This scale was developed to assess the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) as postulated by the Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2000). Recognizing that psychological need frustration encompasses more than just the deprivation of one's needs, this 24-item scale is divided into six subscales corresponding to the psychological needs and their respective levels of satisfaction and frustration:

  - BPN Autonomy Satisfaction
  - BPN Autonomy Frustration
  - BPN Relatedness Satisfaction
  - BPN Relatedness Frustration
  - BPN Competence Satisfaction
  - BPN Competence Frustration

Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never or very rarely true) to 5 (very often or always true).

- Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal – RISC (Cross et al., 2000)
  This 11-item scale was developed to measure the relational-interdependent self-construal, which is defined as the tendency to think of oneself in terms of relationships with close others. The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 7 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."
- Integrative-Self-Knowledge-Scale (Ghorbani et al., 2008)
  Ghorbani et al. developed this 12-item scale to assess a temporally integrated form of self-knowledge, which they describe as an "adaptive and empowering process through which individuals seek to understand their experiences over time in order to achieve desired outcomes". Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never or very rarely true) to 5 (very often or always true).
- Positive and Negative Events
  Participants were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which negative and positive events have occurred in their lives in the past few weeks.
- Experience in Awareness Practices
  Participants were asked whether they have any experience with the following awareness practices: Meditation, Mindfulness, or others. In case of a positive response, they were requested to provide additional information, including the specific type(s) of practice, duration (in months or years), and the motivation behind their engagement. Motivations could include improving well-being, self-discovery, personal growth, disconnecting from daily life, spiritual interest, or other reasons.

Chapter 4: Data analysis

4.1 Scales' reliability

The first analysis we conducted was the assessment of the reliability of the scales used to collect the data. Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the instrument in measuring the intended construct. To assess the reliability of the scales, we have considered internal consistency, which refers to the level of agreement among the items in the questionnaire. To quantify this internal consistency, we have employed Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This index reflects the degree of agreement among multiple measures of the same theoretical concept, obtained at the same administration time and using the same method. Cronbach's alpha can range from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate stronger agreement among the items.

A score below .60 is generally considered unacceptable, indicating low reliability. Scores ranging from .61 to .70 suggest sufficient reliability, while scores between .71 and .80 are considered moderate, reflecting a reasonable level of internal consistency. Scores falling within the range of .81 to .90 indicate good reliability, demonstrating a high degree of internal consistency. Finally, scores above .91 indicate excellent reliability, indicating a strong level of agreement among the items being measured.

Before computing the alpha coefficient, it was necessary to recode the scores of certain items due to their negative formulation compared to the corresponding scale. This recoding ensures compatibility and allows for meaningful comparison between negatively and positively framed items. The operational procedure involved reversing the scores associated with negative statements.

The following items were recoded for the following scales:

- Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire Short Form (FFMQ): item 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24
- Psychological Well-Being (PWB): item 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18
- Material Values Scale: item 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16
- Psychological Entitlement: item 5
- Relational Interdependent Self-Construal: item 8, 9
- Self-Compassion Scale Short form item: 1, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): item 4, 5, 7, 8
- Integrative Self-Knowledge Scale (ISK): item 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

The Cronbach's Alpha scores of each scale, or dimension, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Reliability of scales

Scale or dimension	Number of items	Alpha
FFMQ Non-reactivity	5	.75
FFMQ Observe	4	.76
FFMQ Act with awareness	5	.82
FFMQ Describe	5	.78
FFMQ Not judging	5	.79
Self-Compassion Scale Short form	12	.85
Non-attachment Scale	7	.85
Psychological Entitlement	9	.82
Materialism Success	6	.66
Materialism Centrality	7	.73
Materialism Happiness	5	.81
Psychological Well-Being	18	.79
Perceived Stress Scale	10	.85
Satisfaction with life scale	5	.90
Self-Construal Scale Independent Self	6	.78
Relational Interdependent Self-Construal	11	.87
FMLS Meaning	4	.78
FMLS Pleasure	4	.84
FMLS Rich Life	4	.81
FMLS Serenity	4	.76
FMLS Self-realization	4	.79
Integrative-Self-Knowledge-Scale	12	.89
BPN Autonomy satisfaction	4	.82
BPN Autonomy frustration	4	.84
BPN Relatedness satisfaction	4	.87
BPN Relatedness frustration	4	.89
BPN Competence satisfaction	4	.92
BPN Competence frustration	4	.89

The scales comprising the questionnaire have exhibited strong reliability. In most instances, the Cronbach's Alpha values surpass .81, signifying high levels of reliability. The only exception arises

within the Materialism Success dimension of the Material Values Scale, where the Cronbach's Alpha value slightly falls below .71 (α = .66). Nevertheless, this value still indicates an acceptable level of reliability. Consequently, we can confidently merge the items from each scale into a single index.

4.2 Means and Comparisons

Once the reliability of the measurement scales of the instrument was confirmed, the mean and standard deviation of the values reported by the sample for each construct were calculated. Subsequently, an independent samples t-test was conducted to detect significant differences between practitioners of awareness practices and non-practitioners (Table 2), and later between males and females (Table 3).

Table 2 Comparison between participants with or without practice experience (independent samples t-test)

		Practitioners			Non-practitioners	
	Scale	Mean	SD	Diff.	Mean	SD
FFMQ Total	1-5	3.52	.49		3.45	.51
FFMQ Non-reactivity	1-5	2.92	.83		2.94	.80
FFMQ Observe	1-5	3.70	.80	(*)	3.48	.92
FFMQ Act with awareness	1-5	3.91	.69		3.87	.81
FFMQ Describe	1-5	3.74	.76		3.74	.74
FFMQ Not judging	1-5	3.34	.89		3.24	.91
Self-Compassion Scale	1-5	3.20	.76		3.08	.74
Non-attachment Scale	1-6	4.60	.90		4.42	.97
Psychological Entitlement	1-9	3.00	1.09		3.14	1.13
Materialism Success	1-5	2.21	.73		2.30	.70
Materialism Centrality	1-5	2.61	.70		2.58	.71
Materialism Happiness	1-5	2.21	.85		2.25	.92
Psychological Well-Being	1-6	4.65	.51	(*)	4.50	.61
Perceived Stress Scale	0-4	1.96	.65		1.97	.77
Satisfaction with life scale	1-7	4.80	1.24	(*)	4.41	1.36
Independent Self Scale	1-7	4.95	1.10		4.75	1.16
Interdependent Self Scale	1-7	5.05	1.10		5.00	1.07
FMLS Meaning	1-5	4.02	.76	***	3.58	.88

FMLS Pleasure	1-5	4.09	.78	*	3.82	.80
FMLS Rich Life	1-5	4.29	.82	*	4.00	.75
FMLS Serenity	1-5	3.69	.84		3.57	.85
FMLS Self-realization	1-5	4.18	.80	(*)	3.98	.73
Integrative-Self-Knowledge	1-5	1.11	.61	(*)	3.09	.71
BPN Autonomy satisfaction	1-5	3.94	.73	(*)	3.73	.72
BPN Autonomy frustration	1-5	2.18	.84	*	2.51	.93
BPN Relatedness satisfaction	1-5	4.26	.75		4.22	.73
BPN Relatedness frustration	1-5	1.58	.73		1.63	.86
BPN Competence satisfaction	1-5	3.99	.86		3.80	.90
BPN Competence frustration	1-5	1.76	.76		1.97	1.02
Positive Events	1-7	4.85	1.34	*	4.28	1.47
Negative Events	1-7	3.79	1.91		3.83	1.71

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; (*) $p < .10$

The collected data (presented in Table 2) reveal significant differences between practitioners of mindfulness-related activities and non-practitioners (only practitioners who specified their level/frequency of engagement in mindfulness-related activities were included).

Although both groups exhibit high mean scores, practitioners tend to report slightly higher scores in the six dimensions of psychological well-being, in their global life satisfaction, and self-knowledge.

Participants from both groups demonstrate good levels of mindfulness. They show high averages in the ability to allow thoughts and feelings to come and go without becoming caught up in or carried away by them, to be fully present and attentive to their activities in the present moment, and the skill of describing internal experiences using words. However, practitioners demonstrate a greater capacity to notice or pay attention to both internal and external experiences compared to non-practitioners. Among the five facets of mindfulness, both groups display lower average scores in the ability to adopt a non-evaluative stance toward their own thoughts and feelings.

Practitioners appear to fulfill their need for autonomy to a greater extent than non-practitioners, who, in contrast, experience more frustration with this construct. However, it is important to note that both groups display generally high levels of satisfaction with autonomy and low levels of frustration.

Regarding the other two basic psychological needs (relatedness and competence) as postulated by the Self-Determination Theory, both groups demonstrate high satisfaction levels and low frustration levels.

Practitioners report a greater number of positive events in their lives in recent weeks compared to non-practitioners, while both groups do not report high averages of negative events during the same time frame.

However, the construct that shows the most differences between practitioners and non-practitioners is the one related to the motivations in life. This distinction is particularly evident in the importance given to meaning in life, with practitioners prioritizing it more than non-practitioners. Practitioners also assign higher importance to the pursuit of pleasure and living a life rich in experiences compared to non-practitioners. Moreover, practitioners demonstrate slightly higher scores in the desire for self-realization. In general, the sample displays relatively high averages in the pursuit of all five motivations in life, including the importance placed on the search for serenity, where no differences between the two groups are found.

Both groups exhibit high abilities to release themselves from mental fixations, they perceive themselves as separate, unique, and independent from others, and think of themselves in terms of relationships with close others. Neither group demonstrates particularly high levels of self-compassionate behaviors in everyday life, and they did not perceive their lives as particularly stressful in the past month. Lastly, both groups exhibit lower scores in all three domains of materialism and do they do not believe to deserve more than others do.

Table 3 Comparison between male and female participants (independent samples t-test)

		Males			Females	
	Scale	Mean	SD	Diff.	Mean	SD
FFMQ Total	1-5	3.54	.50	(*)	3.40	.51
FFMQ Non-reactivity	1-5	3.10	.77	*	2.82	.80
FFMQ Observe	1-5	3.53	.89		3.54	.95
FFMQ Act with awareness	1-5	3.84	.75		3.85	.84
FFMQ Describe	1-5	3.82	.76		3.66	.72
FFMQ Not judging	1-5	3.40	.82	(*)	3.17	.94
Self-Compassion Scale	1-5	3.21	.65	(*)	3.03	.79
Non-attachment Scale	1-6	4.47	.97		4.41	.96
Psychological Entitlement	1-9	2.94	1.04	(*)	3.23	1.14
Materialism Success	1-5	2.47	.71	***	2.13	.69

Materialism Centrality	1-5	2.58	.73		2.59	.68
Materialism Happiness	1-5	2.26	.88		2.22	.88
Psychological Well-Being	1-6	4.51	.64		4.53	.56
Perceived Stress Scale	0-4	1.86	.74	(*)	2.05	.72
Satisfaction with life scale	1-7	4.73	1.26	(*)	4.33	1.33
Independent Self Scale	1-7	4.65	1.16	(*)	4.91	1.13
Interdependent Self Scale	1-7	4.91	1.05		5.03	1.10
FMLS Meaning	1-5	3.50	.88	**	3.86	.81
FMLS Pleasure	1-5	3.85	.78		3.93	.82
FMLS Rich Life	1-5	4.05	.71		4.12	.82
FMLS Serenity	1-5	3.54	.85		3.62	.83
FMLS Self-realization	1-5	3.95	.74		4.11	.74
Integrative-Self-Knowledge	1-5	3.90	.72		3.96	.69
BPN Autonomy satisfaction	1-5	3.74	.79		3.79	.67
BPN Autonomy frustration	1-5	2.38	.89		2.46	.93
BPN Relatedness satisfaction	1-5	4.12	.77	(*)	4.30	.72
BPN Relatedness frustration	1-5	1.70	.84		1.60	.84
BPN Competence satisfaction	1-5	3.92	.81		3.78	.91
BPN Competence frustration	1-5	1.88	.89		1.95	.99
Positive Events	1-7	4.47	1.42		4.47	1.47
Negative Events	1-7	3.56	1.70		3.96	1.77

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; (*) $p < .10$

Significant gender differences were observed (as represented in Table 3).

Firstly, males demonstrate a greater ability to allow thoughts and feelings to come and go without becoming caught up in or carried away by them. Overall, men tend to exhibit higher levels of mindfulness and are more inclined than women to adopt a non-evaluative stance towards their thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, men tend to display more self-compassionate behaviors in their everyday lives and report higher levels of life satisfaction. However, it is important to note that both groups exhibit good levels of satisfaction. However, the most notable difference lies in one of the sub-scales of materialism.

While both groups score low mean values relative to the center, men significantly rely more on possessions to judge their own and others' success compared to women.
On the other hand, women tend to hold a stronger belief than men that they deserve preferences, and more than others do, even though both groups exhibit low mean scores in this aspect. Additionally, women demonstrate a stronger inclination towards perceiving themselves as independent from others compared to men. In terms of the need for relatedness, women express higher levels of satisfaction. However, they also tend to perceive slightly higher levels of stress compared to men.
Lastly, women place significantly greater importance on the meaningfulness of their lives compared to men.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

After discussing the results related to the means of the constructs, we proceeded to examine the presence of significant relationships among the investigated constructs. For the analysis of correlations between variables, we calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient, denoted as "r."
The results are presented in the following tables, categorized by areas of interest.
Table 4 provides an overview of the variables associated with mindfulness (including FFMQ, self-compassion, and non-attachment) as well as indicators of well-being (psychological well-being and life satisfaction) and constructs related to more negative aspects (stress, materialism, and entitlement).
Table 5 displays the correlations between variables related to self-understanding (including self-construal and self-knowledge), motives in life and indicators of experiences and well-being (frustration/satisfaction of needs, and the occurrence of positive and negative events in the recent period).
Table 6 illustrates the interrelationships among all the psychological constructs investigated.

Table 4 Correlations between variables related to mindfulness, to well-being and to more negative aspects

	ffmq TOTAL	m. non-reactivity	m. observe	m. act with awareness	m. describe	m. not judging	self. compassion	non. attach	entitlement	mat. success	mat. centrality	mat. happiness	pwb	perceived stress
ffmq_TOTAL	1													
m. non- reactivity	.651**	1												
m. observe	.432**	.283**	1											
m. act with awarn.	.648**	.153*	-.021	1										
m. describe	.724**	.409**	.258**	.394**	1									
m. not judging	.601**	.172*	-.089	.424**	.205**	1								
self.compassion	.611**	.436**	.214**	.373**	.301**	.520**	1							
non.attach	.530**	.516**	.224**	.320**	.283**	.280**	.533**	1						
entitlement	-.073	-.060	.076	-.065	.075	-.215**	-.114	-.075	1					
mat.success	-.190**	-.093	-.122	-.115	-.083	-.162*	-.102	-.169*	.318**	1				
mat.centrality	-.188**	-.162*	.032	-.169*	-.101	-.155*	-.211**	-.294**	.259**	.529**	1			
mat.happiness	-.333**	-.285**	-.124	-.178**	-.157*	-.258**	-.302**	-.388**	.296**	.423**	.414**	1		
pwb	.645**	.439**	.296**	.489**	.472**	.293**	.545**	.580**	-.060	-.151*	-.173*	-.352**	1	
perceived stress	-.607**	-.430**	-.031	-.465**	-.342**	-.544**	-.645**	-.518**	.186**	.041	.167*	.327**	-.593**	1
swls	.470**	.413**	.180**	.302**	.250**	.295**	.420**	.611**	-.092	.015	-.129	-.428**	.576**	-.495**

** p < .01; * p < .05

Table 5 Correlations between variables related self-understanding, motives in life and indicators of experiences and well-being

	independent self	interd. self	fml. meaning	fml. pleasure	fml. rich life	fml. serenity	fml. self-realization	integr. self. kn	auton. sat	auton. frust	relate. sat	relate. frust	compet. sat	compet. frust	positive events
independent self	1														
interd. self	.172*	1													
fml. meaning	.392**	.222**	1												
fml. pleasure	.347**	.106	.269**	1											
fml. rich life	.419**	.071	.430**	.593**	1										
fml. serenity	.379**	.053	.325**	.225**	.161*	1									
fml.Self-realiz.	.465**	.166*	.599**	.326**	.603**	.258**	1								
integr.self.kn	.191**	.150*	.304**	.123	.159*	-.025	.338**	1							
auton.sat	.301**	.235**	.261**	.369**	.292**	.063	.391**	.474**	1						
auton.frust	-.022	.062	.049	-.034	-.043	.237**	-.056	-.400**	-.400**	1					
relate.sat	.233**	.394**	.138*	.311**	.276**	.086	.241**	.351**	.423**	-.222**	1				
relate.frust	-.038	-.311**	-.009	-.080	-.057	.068	-.063	-.411**	-.278**	.346**	-.512**	1			
compet.sat	.244**	.161*	.182**	.217**	.224**	.048	.313**	.446**	.532**	-.285**	.284**	-.269**	1		
compet.frust	-.112	-.184**	-.116	-.080	-.085	.066	-.141*	-.633**	-.424**	.385**	-.286**	.500**	-.575**	1	
positive events	.127	.181**	.143*	.207**	.245**	.044	.221**	.256**	.414**	-.228**	.336**	-.221**	.332**	-.233**	1
negative events	.104	-.084	-.001	.089	.062	.149*	.048	-.191**	-.200**	.327**	-.130	.148*	-.160*	.224**	-.035

** p < .01; * p < .05

Table 6 Correlations between all the psychological constructs investigated

	ffmq_ TOTAL	m.non-reactiv.	m. observe	m. act awaren.	m. describe	m. not judging	self. compass	non. attach	entitle-ment	mat. success	mat. centrality	mat. happin.	pwb	perceived stress	swls
independent self	.191**	.113	.215**	.108	.248**	-.062	.061	.270**	.364**	-.037	-.027	.028	.272**	-.011	.194**
interd. self	.111	.063	.252**	.039	.129	-.101	.012	.157*	.170*	-.006	.088	-.110	.200**	-.027	.203**
fml. meaning	.228**	.144*	.291**	.210**	.231**	-.126	.126	.129	.276**	-.112	-.047	-.077	.217**	-.027	.157*
fml. pleasure	.087	.057	.192**	.057	.051	-.066	.081	.243**	.169*	.119	.125	-.026	.218**	-.038	.312**
fml. rich life	.123	.102	.215**	.059	.151*	-.116	.034	.172*	.218**	.019	.044	-.048	.272**	-.056	.244**
fml. serenity	.046	.021	.325**	-.018	.070	-.201**	-.030	.145*	.182**	.034	-.048	.023	-.066	.176**	.043
fml.Self-realiz.	.239**	.214**	.229**	.181**	.191**	-.048	.103	.252**	.266**	-.092	-.081	-.087	.313**	-.151*	.227**
integr.self.kn	.657**	.466**	.232**	.482**	.488**	.346**	.522**	.438**	-.048	-.221**	-.150*	-.285**	.644**	-.499**	.355**
auton.sat	.462**	.307**	.152*	.383**	.275**	.293**	.354**	.487**	-.049	-.103	-.121	-.313**	.564**	-.462**	.577**
auton.frust	-.309**	-.133*	.027	-.338**	-.101	-.360**	-.371**	-.276**	.347**	.172*	.203**	.260**	-.418**	.480**	-.349**
relate.sat	.198**	.121	.203**	.140*	.060	.094	.230**	.347**	-.059	-.183**	-.095	-.304**	.379**	-.212**	.373**
relate.frust	-.303**	-.153*	-.127	-.268**	-.144*	-.227**	-.252**	-.285**	.143*	.234**	.116	.317**	-.367**	.251**	-.227**
compet.sat	.518**	.296**	.242**	.364**	.315**	.359**	.440**	.420**	.091	-.012	-.068	-.212**	.535**	-.528**	.413**
compet.frust	-.622**	-.343**	-.186**	-.466**	-.424**	-.468**	-.557**	-.389**	.014	.134*	.141*	.350**	-.609**	.533**	-.399**
positive events	.245**	.167*	.218**	.084	.119	.171*	.257**	.300**	-.155*	-.072	-.114	-.230**	.380**	-.317**	.413**
negative events	-.210**	-.162*	-.014	-.169*	-.069	-.216**	-.196**	-.147*	.201**	-.005	.040	.097	-.235**	.357**	-.247**

Based on the data presented in Table 4, it is evident that there are multiple noteworthy relationships among the various psychological factors examined.

When considering FFMQ, self-compassion, and non-attachment as constructs associated with mindfulness, and psychological well-being and life satisfaction as indicators of overall well-being, the positive correlations observed between total FFMQ, self-compassion, non-attachment, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction might be interpreted as an indication of the close connection between mindfulness practice and overall well-being.

Specifically, the data suggests that individuals with higher levels of mindfulness, as indicated by higher scores on FFMQ, self-compassion, and non-attachment, tend to also have higher levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Conversely, these qualities appear to act as protective factors against perceived stress, as indicated by their negative correlations. Interestingly, total FFMQ, non-attachment, and psychological well-being are all negatively correlated with materialism, hinting at a possible discordance between an inclination towards material possessions and these aspects of well-being and mindfulness.

Materialism, in its centrality and happiness forms, shows a negative correlation with self-compassion, and materialism happiness also negatively correlates with satisfaction with life. This potentially suggests that individuals who place a high value on material goods for centrality or happiness purposes may struggle with self-compassion and life satisfaction. Additionally, all materialism subscales are positively correlated with one another and with psychological entitlement, indicating a cohesive psychological profile where individuals who exhibit higher levels of entitlement are likely to display elevated materialism across all its dimensions.

However, perceived stress is uniquely positioned in its positive correlation with psychological entitlement and certain aspects of materialism (i.e., centrality and happiness) but not with materialism success. This may suggest that stress perception is more closely tied to the value individuals place on material goods for their perceived centrality and happiness, rather than their association with success.

As for the FFMQ subscales, it is noteworthy that "Not judging" is the only facet negatively related to both psychological entitlement and materialism success. This suggests that individuals who are less judgmental may perceive lower levels of entitlement and are less likely to associate material goods with success. On the other hand, the FFMQ subscale "Observe" displays minimal associations among all FFMQ subscales and exhibits the weakest correlations, indicating its relative independence from the other factors under consideration.

The correlation data presented in Table 5 affords us a glimpse into the intricate web of relationships between self-construal (independent and interdependent self), self-knowledge, life motives, need

satisfaction and frustration, and life events. We could consider the self-construal together with self-knowledge, grouping them as constructs related to self-understanding. The consistency of positive correlations among these elements highlights their interdependence. This interconnectedness also extends to need satisfaction, with each construct positively correlated to it, highlighting that a deeper understanding and a more defined sense of self could is related to fulfilment of psychological needs. The dynamics shift as we introduce life events into the equation. Self-knowledge shows a positive correlation with positive events and a negative one with negative events. Meanwhile, only the independent self-construct exhibits a positive correlation with positive events among the two self-construal. This might suggest that individuals who possess a strong sense of independent self could be more prone to positive experiences in life.

Looking at need frustration, an intriguing contrast emerges. Both self-knowledge and the interdependent self manifest negative correlations with it. This contrast further underscores the distinction between the constructs of need satisfaction and need frustration.

Concerning life motives, the independent self displays a positive correlation with all five motives. However, the interdependent self, in an interesting divergence, only shows a positive correlation with two life motives (meaning and self-realization). Moreover, meaning and self-realization share a positive correlation with self-knowledge. The five life motives are all positively correlated, revealing a closely knit network among them. When considering four of the life motives (pleasure, meaning, rich life, and self-realization), a positive correlation emerges with the satisfaction of all basic psychological needs and with positive events. Intriguingly, FML serenity, the only motive that doesn't share this correlation, is positively linked with autonomy frustration and negative events, painting a complex picture of life motives and their interrelationships with psychological needs and life events. Negative events also hold a positive correlation with the frustrations of all psychological needs, and a negative one with need satisfaction (excluding relatedness). While all positive events are negatively associated with need frustration and positively associated with their satisfaction.

Finally, Table 6 presents correlations between a variety of psychological constructs, namely those related to mindfulness, well-being, negative aspects, self-understanding, life motives, and indicators of experiences and well-being, can be highlighted.

Looking first at mindfulness-associated variables (FFMQ, self-compassion, and non-attachment) and those indicative of well-being (psychological well-being and life satisfaction), they share strong positive correlations with need satisfaction, positive events, and self-knowledge. Conversely, these factors negatively correlate with need frustration and negative events. This pattern suggests a strong link between mindfulness practice and overall well-being. In essence, individuals displaying higher

mindfulness levels, as indicated by higher scores on FFMQ, self-compassion, and non-attachment, tend to also experience higher psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

Examining self-construal, we notice that the independent self positively correlates with well-being variables and two mindfulness-associated constructs, namely FFMQ and non-attachment. The interdependent self mirrors this pattern, with one notable exception: it does not correlate positively with the total FFMQ score but rather with its subscale, FFMQ Observe.

The FFMQ Observe subscale stands out due to its unique positive correlations. It is the only subscale that shows a positive correlation with the interdependent self and three of the five life motives (pleasure, rich life, and serenity). Interestingly, FFMQ's 'not judging' subscale presents a contrasting pattern; it is the only subscale devoid of any positive relationship with the life motives and is negatively correlated with the motivation for serenity.

Psychological Entitlement also provides an interesting observation. It exhibits positive correlations with all life motives and both self-construal, yet it is positively associated with the frustration of autonomy and relatedness needs, suggesting a potentially complex interplay between entitlement, self-perception, and need satisfaction.

Moving to life motives, the motivation for meaning shows positive correlation with both well-being indicators (psychological well-being and life satisfaction) and the total FFMQ score. Similarly, the motivations for pleasure and rich life correlate positively with the well-being indicators and non-attachment. The motivation for self-realization displays a similar pattern but is also negatively associated with perceived stress, which suggests a potential moderating role of self-realization on stress levels. Notably, the motivation for serenity presents the fewest correlations, with positive associations primarily with non-attachment and stress.

On a more negative spectrum, materialism, specifically its 'happiness' value, is negatively correlated with need satisfaction and positively associated with need frustration. The other two materialism aspects, success, and centrality, only show positive relationships with need frustration. Intriguingly, none of the materialism values are correlated with either positive or negative events, suggesting their effect on life experiences may be indirect or moderated by other factors. Further, they do not show any significant relationships with life motives or self-construal, hinting at a potential disconnect between materialistic tendencies and these constructs. However, all three types of materialism and stress share negative correlations with self-knowledge.

4.4 Regression and Mediation Analysis

Following the correlation analysis, it is possible to proceed with the regression analysis. Regression analysis is a technique used to evaluate the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The main objective is to understand how variations in the independent variables associate with each dependent variable. It was performed a multiple regression analysis, which represents an extension of the simple linear regression model and allows to predict the values of a dependent variable based on the observed values of multiple independent variables. From these analyses, relevant information can be obtained regarding the strength and direction of associations between the examined constructs. We considered the coefficient R^2, called coefficient of determination, which is an index of the estimate of the shared variance among the predictors as a whole and each final variable included in the model. Generally, an R^2 between .30 and .60 indicates an adequate amount of explained variance. We also reported the standardized beta coefficients, which express the specific contribution of each predictor variable in relation to each final variable. The β coefficient takes positive values if the relationship between the predictor and the criterion is positive and negative values if it indicates an inverse association.

We hypothesized the action of some mediators. We conducted a mediation analysis using the multiple regression analysis and calculating indirect effects using the bootstrap method with 10,000 resamples, to verify if there is indeed a mediation effect.

For the mediation effect to be present, the following four conditions must be met:

1. The predictors (independent variables) must be significantly associated with the dependent variables.
2. The predictors must have significant relationships with the presumed mediators.
3. The initial link between predictors and dependent variables, with the effect of mediators partialized, should decrease to the point of becoming non-significant in the case of complete mediation.
4. A relationship between mediators and dependent variables should emerge in the regression analysis.

Three regression analyses were performed.

The first investigates the association between FFMQ total, self-compassion, non-attachment, and integrative self-knowledge as independent variables, and psychological well-being (PWB), satisfaction with life scale (SWLS), and perceived stress as final variables, addressing point 1 to understand which effects can be mediated (Table 7).

The second area of analysis examines the links between the four predictors (FFMQ total, self-compassion, non-attachment, and integrative self-knowledge) and the six potential mediators: autonomy satisfaction, autonomy frustration, relatedness satisfaction, relatedness frustration, competence satisfaction, competence frustration, considered as dependent variables, addressing point 2 (Table 8).

Points 3 and 4 are tested in the third analysis, which considers as predictors the original total independent variables (FFMQ total, self-compassion, non-attachment, integrative self-knowledge) and the six presumed mediators (autonomy satisfaction, autonomy frustration, relatedness satisfaction, relatedness frustration, competence satisfaction, competence frustration). The dependent variables are PWB, SWLS, and perceived stress. The aim is to examine how all the ten independent variables together associated with the three final variables (Table 9).

Table 7 Associations between predictors (FFMQ total, self-compassion, non-attachment, integrative self-knowledge) and final variables (PWB, SWLS, perceived stress)

	pwb	perceived stress	swls
	$R^2 = .56$	$R^2 = .51$	$R^2 = .40$
ffmq tot.	.24***	-.25***	.19*
self-compassion	.08	-.37***	.05
non.attach	.26***	-.16**	.48***
integr.self.kn	.33***	-.07	-.01

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01 ; *** p < .001

Regarding the first part of the analysis, from Table 7, we can observe that the first dependent variable, psychological well-being, is significantly and positively associated with three out of the four predictors: FFMQ total, non-attachment, and integrative self-knowledge. Collectively, these predictors account for 56% of the variance in psychological well-being. These findings align with our initial hypothesis, asserting a positive association between mindfulness and self-knowledge and the eudaimonic concept of psychological well-being.

Turning our attention to the dependent variable of perceived stress, it is significantly and inversely related to FFMQ total, self-compassion, and non-attachment. Collectively, these predictors account for 51% of the variance in stress. An intriguing observation is that while mindfulness is significantly associated with perceived stress, self-knowledge does not share this connection. This insight aligns fittingly with our research hypothesis. We initially theorized that mindfulness and its related constructs, such as non-attachment and self-compassion, have stronger ties to the hedonic components of well-being. These components are closely linked with immediate emotional states, encompassing stress responses. On the other hand, self-knowledge may contribute more to a broader sense of well-being, or eudaimonic psychological well-being, which is not as directly associated with immediate emotional reactions, like stress. Therefore, our findings offer support to these suppositions. Lastly, the dependent variable satisfaction with life is significantly and positively associated with both total FFMQ and non-attachment. However, the association with the latter is considerably stronger. These predictors account for 40% of the variance in life satisfaction. These findings align with our initial hypothesis, although they amplify its implications beyond our original expectations. We anticipated a softer relationship between self-knowledge and life satisfaction. This result could suggest that while self-knowledge contributes to deeper, eudaimonic well-being, it might not directly translate into feelings of life satisfaction, which are often shaped by more hedonic experiences.

In summary, our findings confirm the hypothesis that self-knowledge significantly contributes to eudaimonic well-being (as captured by PWB) yet does not substantially associate with cognitive well-being (as indicated by satisfaction with life). In contrast, mindfulness demonstrates associations with both aspects of well-being. Indeed, the FFMQ total and non-attachment are related to all the dependent variables, thereby substantiating the hypothesis of a potent link between mindfulness and various facets of well-being.

Interestingly, self-compassion appears solely linked to perceived stress, exhibiting a negative relationship. This observation suggests that the role of self-compassion may primarily reside in its protective capacity, alleviating the impacts of stress rather than directly enhancing subjective well-being.

Table 8 Associations between predictors (FFMQ total, self-compassion, non-attachment, integrative self-knowledge) and presumed mediators (autonomy satisfaction, autonomy frustration, relatedness satisfaction, relatedness frustration, competence satisfaction, competence frustration)

	auton. sat	auton. frust	relate. sat	relate. frust	compet. sat	compet. frust

	R^2 = .33	R^2 = .20	R^2 = .19	R^2 = .18	R^2 = .32	R^2 = .50
ffmq tot	.12	.05	-.19*	.00	.27**	-.27***
self-compassion	-.04	-.21*	.01	.01	.13	-.22***
non attach	.32***	-.06	.30***	-.13	.14*	.03
integr.self.kn	.26***	-.30***	.34***	-.36***	.14	-.36***

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01 ; *** p < .001

As presented in Table 8, the second portion of our analysis investigates the relationship between the four predictors and the six potential mediators. The predictors, non-attachment and integrative self-knowledge, exhibit strong, significant, and positive associations with autonomy satisfaction. These independent variables account for 33% of the variance in the dependent variable. This finding aligns well with our initial hypotheses. We postulated that individuals with a deeper understanding of themselves (i.e., possessing greater self-knowledge) are better equipped to make decisions that resonate with their fundamental values and interests. This aligns with the concept of autonomy, which is characterized by the feeling that one's actions are self-determined and congruent with personal beliefs and values. Additionally, non-attachment, or the absence of rigid fixation on ideas, can potentially facilitate an acceptance of evolving desires. This could enhance flexibility and adaptability in pursuing these desires, thus promoting autonomy. Our findings offer empirical support to these suppositions.

The dependent variable autonomy frustration exhibits a significant negative relationship with the independent variables of self-compassion and integrative self-knowledge. These independent variables account for 20% of the variance.

Individuals with deficient self-knowledge are prone to being driven by extrinsic motivations. This could potentially lead to frustration in their sense of volition and psychological freedom, as their actions might not align with their inherent values or interests.

Additionally, as previously highlighted, self-compassion seems to play a primarily protective role. Its negative association is uniquely observed with autonomy and competence frustration, thus reinforcing its buffering role against these negative psychological experiences.

The independent variables non-attachment and integrative self-knowledge also demonstrate significant, positive associations with relatedness satisfaction. The capacity to detach oneself from mental fixations could likely foster healthier relationships, subsequently enhancing feelings of intimacy and connection with significant others. Furthermore, self-knowledge might empower individuals to express their authentic selves to others, thereby facilitating a deeper sense of relatedness.

Interestingly, a weak but significant negative relationship emerges between relatedness satisfaction and the total FFMQ score. This particular finding, which is apparent in regression analysis but not in correlation analysis, might be explained by the hypothesis that achieving a profound peace and connection with oneself may engender a desire to maintain these personal boundaries. Consequently, this might reduce the perceived need for external relationships, thereby leading to a decrease in the satisfaction of the need for relatedness.

The predictors account for 19% of the variance in relatedness satisfaction.

Integrative self-knowledge stands out as the sole predictor significantly associated with relatedness frustration, demonstrating a negative relationship and explaining 18% of its variance. This observation aligns with our hypotheses. A lack of self-understanding might lead individuals to form relationships with people who do not align with their genuine interests or wants. This mismatch could potentially breed frustration due to unfulfilled expectations or needs within these relationships. Thus, these findings underscore the critical role of self-knowledge in shaping the quality of our relationships, highlighting the importance of self-understanding for fostering satisfying connections and minimizing relationship frustration.

The dependent variable competence satisfaction exhibits a significant positive relationship with the predictors FFMQ total and non-attachment, which account for 32% of its variance.

Indeed, certain facets of mindfulness, particularly the 'act with awareness' component, are likely to foster effective task completion, thus enhancing the sense of efficacy and mastery. A similar case can be made for non-attachment. The ability to steer clear of mental fixations can foster improved concentration, resulting in superior performance and consequently, an increased sense of mastery.

Interestingly, the relationship between self-knowledge and competency satisfaction is not statistically significant in the regression model. This suggests that the effect of mindfulness may be more influential. However, it's worth noting that self-knowledge and competency satisfaction demonstrate a significant correlation in our analysis. Also, while the p-value for the effect of integrative self-knowledge in the regression analysis is not below the standard significance threshold of .05, it is close ($p = .068$).

Lastly, the dependent variable competence frustration displays a negative relationship with the predictors FFMQ total, self-compassion, and integrative self-knowledge. These predictors account for a substantial portion (50%) of the variance in the dependent variable.

The need for competence seems to be intricately linked with mindfulness, as both its satisfaction and frustration are associated with the total FFMQ score. In particular, deficiencies in the concentration and non-judgment facets of mindfulness could potentially heighten frustration around competence needs.

Importantly, a lack of self-compassion, characterized by an absence of kindness towards oneself and heightened self-judgment, could escalate the risk of competence frustration. This is likely because individuals with lower self-compassion might judge themselves more harshly in cases of failure, leading to a general sense of incompetence.

Simultaneously, the significance of self-knowledge remains critical. Without self-knowledge, individuals might chase goals misaligned with their genuine desires or beyond their capabilities, leading to potential failure and a resultant sense of inadequacy.

Table 9 Associations between predictors plus mediators (total FFMQ score, self-compassion, non-attachment, and integrative self-knowledge, autonomy satisfaction, autonomy frustration, relatedness satisfaction, relatedness frustration, competence satisfaction, competence frustration) and dependent variables (psychological well-being, satisfaction with life scale, and perceived stress).

	pwb	perceived stress	swls
	$R^2 = .62$	$R^2 = .59$	$R^2 = .51$
ffmq tot	.18**	-.19**	.16*
self compassion	.03	-.29***	.01
non attach	.19***	-.13*	.36***
integr.self.kn	.19**	.02	-.17*
auton. sat	.12*	-.05	.28***

auton.frust	-.09	.23***	-.11*
relate.sat	.08	.04	.16*
relate.frust	.03	-.05	.11
compet.sat	.07	-.16**	-.02
compet.frust	-.15*	.05	-.12

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01 ; *** p < .001

In the table 9 we can observe the relationship between the initial four predictors plus the six potential mediators as additional independent variables, and the final dependent variables (third section of the analysis) and the dependent variables.

We can see that the association between psychological well-being and FFMQ total has decreased once the effect of the competence frustration was partialized, while the negative relationship between competence frustration and psychological well-being emerges.

The association between psychological well-being and non-attachment has also decreased once the effect of autonomy satisfaction was partialized, while the positive relationship between autonomy satisfaction and psychological well-being emerges.

Lastly, the association between psychological well-being and integrative self-knowledge has also decreased once the effects of autonomy satisfaction and competence frustration were partialized, with a significant positive relationship emerging with autonomy satisfaction and a significant negative relationship with competence frustration. The proportion of variance in psychological well-being explained by the independent variables rises to 62%.

Regarding perceived stress, we can observe a decrease in the effects of FFMQ total once the effect of competence satisfaction was partialized, while the negative relationship between competence satisfaction and perceived stress emerges.

We also notice a decrease in the relationship between perceived stress and self-compassion once the effect of autonomy frustration was partialized, while a strong positive relationship between autonomy frustration and perceived stress emerges.

Moreover, perceived stress has a decrease in its relationship with non-attachment once the effect of competence satisfaction was partialized, while the negative relationship between competence satisfaction and perceived stress emerges.
The percentage of variance in perceived stress explained by the predictors now increases to 59%.
Finally, regarding satisfaction with life we note that the significant direct relationship initially present with FFMQ total has decreased once the effect of relatedness satisfaction was partialized, while the positive relationship between relatedness satisfaction and life satisfaction emerges.
Life satisfaction also shows a decrease in the initial relationship with non-attachment once the effects of autonomy satisfaction and relatedness satisfaction were partialized, while the positive relationship between these two mediators (especially strong with autonomy satisfaction) and life satisfaction emerges.
The proportion of variance in satisfaction with life explained by the independent variables improves significantly, reaching 51%.

To assess the significance of these indirect effects, the bootstrap method was employed with 10,000 resamples. The significant indirect effects are reported in Table 10.

Table 10 Indirect Effects: Bootstrap analysis with 10,000 resamplings (non-standardized estimates; significant effects in bold)

Predictor	*Mediator*	*Criterion*	*IE*	*Confidence interval 95%*
ffmq tot	Competence Frustration	PWB	**.050**	**[.006; .126]**
non attach	Autonomy Satisfaction	PWB	.020	[-.002; .051]
integr.self.kn	Autonomy Satisfaction	PWB	.025	[-.003; .074]
integr.self.kn	Competence Frustration	PWB	**.054**	**[.006; .125]**
non attach	Competence Satisfaction	Stress	**-.059**	**[-.176; -.004]**

self-compassion	Autonomy Frustration	Stress	**-.054**	**[-.115; -.010]**
non attach	Competence Satisfaction	Stress	-.018	[-.064; .000]
ffmq tot	Relatedness Satisfaction	swls	-.066	[-.216; .001]
non attach	Autonomy Satisfaction	swls	**.127**	**[.062; .222]**
non attach	Relatedness Satisfaction	swls	**.066**	**[.012; .158]**

For estimates to be deemed significant, the confidence interval must exclude 0. Thus, as per Table 10, it becomes apparent that not all initially identified indirect effects hold significance.

The data corroborates the mediating role of competence frustration in the relationship between psychological well-being and FFMQ total. We can, therefore, conclude that mindfulness, possibly due to its components of "act with awareness" and "non-judging", is negatively associated with competence frustration. As we hypothesized, a reduction in competence need frustration is associated with enhanced psychological well-being. Hence, the association between FFMQ and psychological well-being can be attributed to both its indirect effect, through its association with a decrease in competence need frustration, and its direct effect on psychological well-being. This finding highlights the positive association of mindfulness with psychological well-being, both directly and indirectly.

The relationship between psychological well-being and integrative self-knowledge is also reduced when we control for the effect of competence frustration. It appears that self-knowledge may facilitate a decrease in the frustration of the need for competence, and this reduction subsequently serves as a protective factor against stress. Therefore, there is a mediation effect of competence frustration in the link between psychological well-being and integrative self-knowledge. Nonetheless, self-knowledge also has a direct association with psychological well-being. This dual role emphasizes the association of self-knowledge with psychological well-being, both directly and indirectly through its relationship with competence frustration. This suggests that self-knowledge is not only directly linked to well-being, but may also be associated with a reduction in competence frustration, which in turn is related to psychological well-being.

When considering perceived stress we notice a decrease in the effect of the FFMQ total once competence satisfaction is accounted for. The FFMQ score is positively associated with competence satisfaction, which in turn is linked to a reduction in perceived stress. This suggests that competence satisfaction may play a protective role, buffering against stress. However, the direct relationship of FFMQ with stress still persists.

Autonomy frustration is a mediator in the relationship between perceived stress and self-compassion. Self-compassion, by associating with a lessening of the frustration of the need for autonomy, indirectly relates to a reduction in stress levels. However, there is also a direct relationship observed between self-compassion and lower levels of perceived stress.

Lastly, we can observe indirect associations of both autonomy satisfaction and relatedness satisfaction within the relation between life satisfaction and non-attachment. Non-attachment, characterized by an individual's capacity to free oneself from fixed mental obsessions, could foster a healthier sense of connection and intimacy with others. The satisfaction in relatedness, in turn, could associate with an increase in overall life satisfaction. Furthermore, non-attachment may encourage an openness to the evolution of personal desires and interests, cultivating greater adaptability and flexibility in pursuing them. This alignment with personal volition, related to non-attachment, positively associates with life satisfaction. Importantly, a direct association between non-attachment and life satisfaction is also observed.

In summary, in our study, individuals who cultivate mindfulness, demonstrate non-attachment, and exhibit a high degree of self-knowledge tend to also experience elevated levels of psychological well-being. Non-attachment shows a direct association, whereas mindfulness and self-knowledge also exhibit an indirect effect via their association with lower levels of competence frustration. This finding highlights the notable relationship between lower levels of competence frustration and higher psychological well-being.

Regarding stress, it appears to be inversely related to levels of mindfulness, non-attachment, and self-compassion. Non-attachment is directly associated with lower stress levels, while mindfulness displays both direct and indirect effects. More specifically, mindfulness is associated with higher competence satisfaction, which, in turn, is associated with lower stress. Self-compassion likewise exhibits both a direct and indirect effects with stress, the latter achieved by its association with lower levels of autonomy frustration, which in turn is related to a reduction in stress levels. Consequently, competence satisfaction might serve as a protective factor against stress.

Lastly, life satisfaction is directly related to both mindfulness and non-attachment. Non-attachment also exerts an indirect effect, being related to the fulfillment of autonomy and relationship needs, which in turn are linked to increased life satisfaction.

Chapter 5: General Discussion

5.1 Conclusions

Building on the theoretical and empirical foundations reported in Chapters 1 and 2, this research aimed to examine whether self-knowledge and mindfulness contribute to higher levels of both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being, and lower levels of perceived stress.

Specifically, we hypothesized a link between mindfulness practices and affective and cognitive aspects of well-being, while we suggested a stronger relation between self-knowledge and eudaimonic well-being. Moreover, we proposed that individuals who have nurtured higher levels of self-knowledge and mindfulness may experience increased satisfaction and decreased frustration concerning their basic psychological needs. Specifically, we anticipated a positive association between autonomy and self-knowledge, as well as between competence and mindfulness, which should be linked to improved overall well-being.

To investigate these constructs, we developed a self-report questionnaire, which was distributed and completed by 222 Italian participants aged 18 to 84, including 122 females and 99 males. We verified the reliability of the scales through the Cronbach's Alpha test, confirming the internal consistency of the measurement instrument. An independent samples t-test was then conducted to detect significant differences between practitioners and non-practitioners of awareness practices, and between males and females.

Afterwards, we examined the presence of correlations between all the psychological constructs investigated. To specify the strength and direction of these associations, regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationships between our predictors (FFMQ total, self-compassion, non-attachment, integrative self-knowledge) and our independent variables (PWB, SWLS, perceived stress). Once verified associations between predictors plus mediators and dependent variables, we conducted a mediation analysis to confirm if the basic psychological need indeed has a mediation effect.

Significant results emerged in the exploration of differences between mindfulness practitioners and non-practitioners. Indeed, practitioners tend to report higher scores in psychological well-being, life satisfaction, self-knowledge, and life motivations. They are more likely to fulfill their need for autonomy and to report more positive life events.

Interesting findings were also observed in the comparison between women and men. Women tend to perceive themselves as more independent, are more likely to fulfill their need for relationships, and attribute greater importance to the meaningfulness of their lives. Men, on the other hand, tend to

exhibit higher levels of mindfulness, self-compassion, life satisfaction, and lower levels of stress. In line with the literature (LeFebvre & Huta, 2021), men in our sample rely more heavily on material goods to judge their own and others' success.

The data obtained were subsequently processed through analyses of existing correlations between the various variables included in the study, to test initial research hypotheses and verify the presence of significant relationships between the constructs of interest. As expected, results showed that as mindfulness and self-knowledge increase, so do psychological well-being, life satisfaction, needs satisfaction, and positive events. Conversely, these factors negatively correlate with frustration of needs and negative events. As motivations towards meaning and self-realization increase, so do self-knowledge and mindfulness. On the other hand, when self-knowledge and mindfulness decrease, levels of materialism and stress also decrease.

A regression analysis was then conducted considering the predictors: FFMQ total, self-compassion, non-attachment, and integrative self-knowledge. Dependent variables considered were: PWB, SWLS, and perceived stress. Results showed that, in line with our hypotheses, self-knowledge significantly contributes to eudaimonic well-being (as revealed by PWB), but it does not substantially associate with cognitive well-being (as indicated by life satisfaction). On the contrary, mindfulness shows associations with both aspects of well-being. Self-compassion appears to have just a negative relationship with stress, suggesting mainly a protective role.

A subsequent regression analysis between predictors and possible mediators confirmed our supposition that autonomy need strongly associates with self-knowledge, and also unveiled a significant relationship with the need for relationships. As hypothesized, mindfulness was particularly relevant for the need for competence. Surprisingly, a negative relationship between relatedness satisfaction and total FFMQ emerged, potentially suggesting that a profound peace and connection with oneself may lessen the perceived need for external relationships.

Moreover, the only non-statistically significant relationship between self-knowledge and needs was observed with competency satisfaction. This could suggest that mindfulness exert a more influential effect. However, it is worth noting that our analysis revealed a significant correlation between self-knowledge and competency satisfaction.

Finally, the ultimate goal of this research was to investigate significant indirect effects of the total FFMQ, self-compassion, non-attachment, and integrative self-knowledge, considering the following mediators: autonomy satisfaction, autonomy frustration, relatedness satisfaction, relatedness frustration, competence satisfaction, and competence frustration, on psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and perceived stress.

The results confirm the mediating role of competence frustration in the relationship between psychological well-being and total FFMQ, as well as integrative self-knowledge. Competence satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between perceived stress and total FFMQ. Autonomy frustration mediates the relationship between perceived stress and self-compassion. Autonomy satisfaction and relatedness satisfaction play a mediating role within the relationship between life satisfaction and non-attachment.

In conclusion, our results support the initial hypothesis, underscoring the significance of mindfulness and self-knowledge, including their impact on need satisfaction, on various forms of well-being.

5. 2 Limitations

Some limitations of this study should be noted. First, due to the extensive use of scales in the research and the consequent time required to complete the questionnaire, respondents' attention could drop, potentially compromising the derived information. A second limitation pertains to the representativeness of the sample. While the number of participants was statistically adequate, future studies could benefit from a larger, randomly sampled participant pool to gain further insights into the results. Moreover, the statistical analyses were structured according to specified criteria such as gender and experience in mindfulness practices, while we did not analyze other potentially relevant variables such as age, education, or profession, which suggest avenues for further exploration in future studies. Lastly, due to the correlational nature of this study, it was not possible to examine the causal relationships between the constructs. Therefore, further exploration through experimental research methods or longitudinal studies would be beneficial.

5.3 Possible Future Research Developments

As previously noted, potential advancements for future research could include conducting statistical analyses with additional focus on variables such as age, education, or profession. Moreover, future research could benefit significantly from further exploration using experimental research methods or longitudinal studies.

Through our review of existing literature and the findings from the present research, it is clear that various types of well-being are relevant and do not necessarily conflict with each other.

Indeed, we believe that the concept of balance, viewed both as a theoretical guide and an empirical reality, deserves further exploration. Future studies should consider topics such as defining the thresholds of these constructs, determining what constitutes too little or too much.

In addition, it would be enlightening to delve deeper into the unexpected negative relationship that emerged in our research between relatedness satisfaction and the total FFMQ.

In conclusion, given the established benefits of citizen well-being for society as a whole, exploring policies and interventions that might effectively enhance mindfulness and self-knowledge could contribute significantly to the overall enhancement of societal well-being.

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