Preliminary Investigation of Continuous Self-Improvement & the Big Five Personality Factors

Dale Hilty, PhD

Background

John R. Wooden's father shared two principles which were a major influence for his life: (1) "Don't try to be better than someone else, and (2) Always try to be the best you can be" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 17). The first principle was a reminder that a successful life does not find peace of mind by comparing one's self to others. There is an interconnection between the second principle and Wooden's competitive greatness construct (CG). The definition of CG: "Be at your best when your best is needed. Enjoyment of a difficult challenge" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 90).

Competitive greatness is linked to continuous self-improvement . By making the focus of life primarily on individual growth and development, there are endless opportunities to expand our skills and abilities. In Wooden's words: "We don't have be superstars or win championships to reach competitive greatness. All we have to do is learn to rise to every occasion, give your best effort and make those around us better as we do it. It's not about winning. It's about learning to give all we have to give" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 91).



Background (Cont'd)

Wooden created a pyramid of success as guide to the continuous self-improvement process. In his books, Wooden provides explanations for each of the 15 building blocks.

Key words for each block are: (1) hard work and planning (Industriousness), (2) enjoyment (Enthusiasm), (3) mutual esteem & devotion (Friendship), (4) beneficial work (Cooperation), (5) self-respect (Loyalty), (6) discipline (Self-Control), (7) observation & open-mindedness (Alertness), (8) decisions & action (Initiative), (9) realistic goals (Intentness), (10) physical, mental, moral, & spiritual (Condition), (11) timing & performance (Skill), (12) eagerness & sacrifice (Team Spirit), (13) true to self (Poise), (14) respect without fear (Confidence), and (15) loving a difficult challenge (Competitive Greatness).

Aim

Using an educational intervention, the purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between CG/Continuous Self-Improvement and personality.

Methods

Approximately 60 students in an Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) undergraduate program were the participants in this study.

Instrumentation: In the summer of 2016, I read most of Wooden's books, and transferred his ideas into Likert-type questions. The name of this quantitative instrument is the Wooden Pyramid of Success Questionnaire (WPSQ) which consists of 229 items. In order for the WPSQ to have content validity, it was my goal for the 229 questions to mirror Wooden's own words. The process of developing the WPSQ was assisted by Wooden's decision to major in English at both the undergraduate and graduate degree levels. Measurement of the Big 5 Personality Factors was achieved by selecting Goldberg's (1992) model (i.e., Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Intellect/Imagination).

Hypothesis 1: The CG scale was used to create two groups.(high and moderate-low). Using SPSS 25 independent t-test, it was hypothesized the mean difference between the high versus moderate-low CG groups would be statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2: It was hypothesized Goldberg's Extraversion , Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Intellect/Imagination factors would be above the .80 standard for coefficient alpha reliability.

Hypothesis 3: Linear regression analysis would result in a significant finding using Goldberg's personality factors as the predictor variable and CG as the outcome variable.

Results

Hypothesis 1: The findings from the independent *t*-test were statistically significant for four of the five Goldberg factors. While the mean difference for the Conscientiousness factor was not significant (p=.25), a significant difference was found for the Extroversion (p=.004), Emotional Stability (p=.029), Agreeableness (p=.01), Intellect/Imagination (p=.001).

Results (Cont'd)

Hypothesis 2: The coefficient alpha reliability estimates were Extroversion (.907), Emotional Stability (.873), Agreeableness (.822), Conscientiousness (.769), and Intellect/Imagination (.798). The coefficient alpha estimates were .80 or above for four of the five Goldberg factors while the Conscientiousness was slightly below the standard.

Hypothesis 3: The linear regression analysis confirmed the hypothesis 3 prediction and produced a correlation between competitive greatness and Goldberg's Big Five Personality Factors (Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Intellect/Imagination) of .528 (r square = .279) which is significant ($F(5, 56)=4.331$, $p=.002$). A higher score on the Competitive Greatness scale is associated with higher scores on Goldberg's Big Five personality factors.

Discussion

Based on this preliminary investigation (hypotheses 1 and 3), it appears nursing students with high scores on competitive greatness tend to have higher levels of Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, and Intellect/Imagination scores. These findings provide an initial glance about relationship between competitive greatness (i.e., being the best you can be, continuous self-improvement, appreciating difficult challenges) and personality.

Conclusions

Future investigations will attempt to replicate the findings between competitive greatness (i.e., being the best you can be, continuous self-improvement, appreciating difficult challenges) and personality. Additional investigations will explore the relationship among competitive greatness, conflict handling, assertiveness, anger positive thinking, and other psychological variables.

References

- Goldberg, L. (1992). The development of markers for the Big-Five Factor Structure. *Psychological Assessment*, 4(1), 26-42.
- Wooden, J. & Carty, J. (2005). *Coach Wooden's pyramid of success.* Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

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