



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMOR, LIFE SATISFACTION, EMOTIONS AND WELL-BEING

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### Abstract

The study is focused on evidencing the relationship between Humor Styles variables, positive and negative emotions, Well-Being and Life Satisfaction. Hence, there were six correlation hypotheses and eight prediction hypotheses. Method: The participants were a number of 43 people aged between 20 and 61 ( $M=37.79$ ;  $S.D.=10.48$ ), both females and males from different professional backgrounds. The instruments were the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003) with four dimensions: Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor and Self-defeating humor; the Ryff Well-Being scale (Ryff, 1989), MEST-Ro (Pitariu, Levine, Mușat, & Ispas, 2006) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). The hypotheses were statistically significantly confirmed ( $p<.05$ ). Furthermore, other correlations have been obtained by applying the Pearson correlation test. All the hypotheses and the findings are supported by the international scientific findings presented in the introduction. Further studies should be developed regarding the relationship between Humor Styles and other variables.

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**Keywords:** Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Life satisfaction, Autonomy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The relationship between the Humor Styles and Well-Being

Kuiper (2016) underlines the importance of humor in human life and explains the four types of humor issued by Martin et al. (2003) in the "Humor Styles Questionnaire". Also, the same author evidences that the instrument was translated in 25 foreign languages enhancing activity and interest in research applications.

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Sirigatti et al. (2014) conducted a study regarding the relationship between the humor styles and well-being in Italy. The population sample was a total of 293 individuals (178 females, 115 males) from the Italian high school and undergraduate university students, age between 14 to 25 years. The scales were HSQ (Martin et al., 2003) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being scales (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Hence, the results evidence a positive statistically significant correlation between Affiliative and Self-enhancing humor styles with the six dimensions of the well-being.

Torres-Marín et al. (2017) conducted a study focused on the psychometric proprieties of the Humor Style Questionnaire – Spanish version (Martin et al., 2003) and the relationship between the Humor styles and the personality and well-being dimensions. The authors selected a sample of 1068 participants, age between 18 and 65 years old. They tested the internal consistency of the instrument and the relationship between the personality (Big Five and Hexaco model) and well-being. Furthermore, verifying the external validity in anger management, the results that the Spanish version of the Humor Style Questionnaire represents a reliable and valid measure.

Salavera, Usán & Jarie (2018) were interested to investigate the relationship between the humor styles and the social skills in students. Furthermore, the authors calculated the psychometric indicators and also gender differences. They found out that the male scores are statically significant higher than the female scores at all four types of humor styles. The model constructed with the fourth humor styles and the social skills evidenced an optimum fit.

## **1.2 The relationship between Humor Styles, Emotions and Satisfaction with Life**

Yue et al. (2017) conducted a study focused on the relationship between the Humor Styles, Self-Compassion and Life Satisfaction. The authors applied the Chinese Humor Styles Questionnaire (2007), Satisfaction with Life Scale adapted from the original (Diener et al., 1985) and Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003). The authors used a sample of 277 Chinese participants from Hong Kong, 25 males and 152 females, age between 18 and 60 years old. The bi-variate correlation hypotheses were statistically significant confirmed. Also, the authors find out that humor styles predicted life satisfaction.

Applying the mediating effect of the fourth humor styles, the results confirmed partially the hypotheses in the way that the self-enhancing humor mediated the relationship between the variable self-compassion and the variable satisfaction with the life.

Ford, McCreight & Richardson (2014) were interested to evidence the relationship between the Affective Style, Humor Styles and Happiness as emotion. The authors applied the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003), *BIS/BAS*

*Questionnaire* (Carver and White's, 1994) and *Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)* constructed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper's (1999) for the measurement of the happiness. The authors find out that the relationship between affect styles and happiness was mediated by self-enhancing humor style. Also, another finding evidence that the people involve in self-defeating humor in the way of facilitating the avoidance of the negative emotional experience when problems occurs in daily life. In the same study the authors revealed statistically significant negative correlations between the self-defeating and aggressive humor styles with happiness, and positive statistically significant correlation between the self-enhancing humor style and happiness.

Schermer et al. (2019) conducted a study regarding the Humor Styles in over 28 countries. For the beginning the authors analyzed the central tendency indicators and Alpha Cronbach for the fourth types of humor: Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor and Self-defeating humor. The studied Countries included and Romania. The authors were interested in evidencing humor styles sex differences and humor style related with age. Also, the confirmatory factor analysis across countries was applied.

Hofstein (2005) were interested to investigate in his master thesis the relationship between humor, life satisfaction and the negative life events. The author underline in conclusion that the sense of humor is related to emotional aspects that occur in life as live events and also with life satisfaction. Hence, the coping humor may influence the positive and negative affects.

## 2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

### 2.1. OBJECTIVE

The general objectives of the research:

1. To establish possible bivariate correlations between the Humor Styles variables, positive and negative emotions and, Well-Being and Life Satisfaction.
2. To evidence that Humor Styles are predictors for the Well-Being six dimensions and for the Life Satisfaction.

Secondary objectives:

- Establishing correlations between positive and negative emotions and the fourth Humor Styles: Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor and Self-defeating humor;
- Establishing correlations between positive and negative emotions and the sixth dimension of the Well-Being scale: Self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Purpose in life, Personal growth;

- To evidence possible regression models in order to be able to confirm that the Humor Styles are predictors for the Well-Being dimensions and for the life satisfaction.

## 2.2. HYPOTHESES

The research hypotheses are the followings:

-Hypotheses for the bivariate correlation

1. There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the positive emotions and affiliate humor
2. There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the positive emotions and self enhancing humor
3. There is a negative statistically significant correlation between the negative emotions and affiliate humor
4. There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the autonomy and affiliate humorous
5. There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the autonomy and self enhancing
6. There is a negative statistically significant correlation between the negative emotions and affiliate humorous

-Hypotheses for the predictive models

7. Affiliative Humour predicts positive statistically significant the human autonomy
8. The Self-enhancing humour predicts positive statistically significant the level of human autonomy
9. Aggressive Humour predicts statistically significant negative the human autonomy
10. Affiliate Humour predicts statistically significant the control
11. Aggressive Humour predicts negative statistically significant the personal growth
12. Aggressive Humour predict negative statistically significant the purpose in life
13. Affiliative Humour predicts positive statistically significant the purpose in life
14. Self-Enhancing humor predicts positive statistically significant the purpose in life

## 1. METHOD

### 6.1. The participants

The participants were a group of approximately 43 people aged between 20 and 61 ( $M=37.79$ ;  $S.D.=10.48$ ), both females and males from different professional backgrounds. They responded by filling out a Google document form between 28.08.2020 and 08.09.2020.

## 6.2. The instruments

1. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003). The instrument provides four types of humor (two positive and two negative):

1. Affiliative humor
2. Self-enhancing humor
3. Aggressive humor
4. Self-defeating humor

The authors conducted a validation study on 258 adult participants in the way of the well-being, self-esteem and other variables. All the psychometric coefficients were significant.

2. Ryff's Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) was used to evaluate psychological well-being. The instrument is structured on six dimensions: Self-acceptance, Positive Relations with others, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, and Purpose in Life, from a scale from 1-very low to 6-very high.

Sirigatti, et al. (2014) evidence that the goodness of fit of the CFA model was good and also the construct validity (confirmatory factor analysis).

3. MEST-Ro (Pitariu, Levine, Muşat, & Ispas, 2006) adapted after Levine, E.L. & Xu, Xian (2005). The instrument measure five negative emotions (sad, anger, guilt and shy, anxiety and envy) and five positive emotions (happy, pride, affectivity, vigilance, gratitude) either state experimented or trait in general. The scale was from 1-very low to 10 very high. In the study was selected only the emotions in general from the original questionnaire.

4. Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) is a self report questionnaire with 5 items on a scale from 1-very low to 7-very high.

## 6.3. Procedure

The Ethical code and GDPR legislation for research were the starting point of the application. The instruments were applied on-line Google-docs. Hence, before the instruments application the participants were able to read the following instructions: "Hello, please complete this questionnaire. Completing this questionnaire represents your acceptance to participate in the study and your agreement that the completed data be used for scientific purposes and that the research be published in a scientific journal. We mention that anonymity, ethical conditions in research and GDPR are maintained. Thank you! "

The participants were informed about the research consent and also about the anonymous identity.

#### 6.4. The design

In order to test the regression hypotheses, the variables were the followings:

- Independent variables: Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor and Self-defeating humor.
- Dependent variables: Life Satisfaction, Self-acceptance, Positive Relations with others, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, and Purpose in Life

## 2. RESULTS

Applying the bivariate correlation Pearson test the following results has been obtained:

There are statistically significant positive correlation between the variables: Autonomy and Life satisfaction ( $r=.577$ ;  $p<.001$ ), Autonomy and Life satisfaction ( $r=.361$ ;  $p<.05$ ), Autonomy and Affiliative humor ( $r=.399$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Autonomy and Self-enhancing humor ( $r=.377$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Control and Life satisfaction ( $r=.443$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Control and Affiliative humor ( $r=.635$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Personal Growth and Affiliative humor ( $r=.660$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Positive relationship and Self-enhancing humor ( $r=.324$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Purpose in life with Life Satisfaction ( $r=.348$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Purpose in life with Affiliative humor ( $r=.397$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Purpose in life with Self-enhancing humor ( $r=.511$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Self-acceptance with Life Satisfaction ( $r=.567$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Self-acceptance with Life Satisfaction ( $r=.567$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Self-acceptance with Positive emotions ( $r=.444$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Self-acceptance and Affiliative humor ( $r=.586$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Self-acceptance and Self-enhancing humor ( $r=.433$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Satisfaction with life and Positive emotions ( $r=.483$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Satisfaction with life and Affiliative humor ( $r=.308$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Satisfaction with life and Self-enhancing humor ( $r=.488$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Positive emotions and Affiliative humor ( $r=.309$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Positive and Self-enhancing humor ( $r=.577$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

There are statistically significant negative correlation between the variables: Autonomy and Negative emotions ( $r=-.541$ ;  $p<.001$ ), Autonomy and Life satisfaction ( $r=.361$ ;  $p<.001$ ), Autonomy and Aggressive Humor ( $r=-.439$ ;  $p<.01^*$ ), Control and Negative emotions ( $r=-.613$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Personal Growth and Negative emotions ( $r=-.532$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Personal Growth and Aggressive humor ( $r=-.448$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Purpose in life with Negative Emotions ( $r=-.424$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Purpose in life with Negative Emotions ( $r=-.330$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Self-acceptance and negative emotions ( $r=-.713$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Satisfaction with life and negative emotions ( $r=-.337$ ;  $p<.01$ ), Negative emotions and Affiliative humor ( $r=-.489$ ;  $p<.01$ ), negative and Self-enhancing humor ( $r=-.358$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

Testing the correlation hypotheses the following hypotheses were confirmed:

- There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the positive emotions and affiliate humor
- There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the positive emotions and self enhancing humor
- There is a negative statistically significant correlation between the negative emotions and affiliate humor
- There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the autonomy and affiliate humorous
- There is a positive statistically significant correlation between the autonomy and self enhancing
- There is a negative statistically significant correlation between the negative emotions and affiliate humorous

The hypotheses was statistically significantly confirmed at the statistically significant  $p < .01$  threshold.

After data collection the hypotheses regarding the predictive models (hypotheses 7-14) were tested using the simple linear regression model.

Testing the hypothesis no. 7: Affiliative humor predicts positive statistically significant the human autonomy.

The hypothesis has been confirmed and the predictor Affiliative humor was statistically significant for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .399$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .160$

The regression equation is the following:

$$\text{Autonomy} = 14.6 + .249 * \text{Affiliative humor}$$

Testing the hypothesis no. 8: The Self-enhancing humor predicts positive statistically significant the level of human autonomy.

The hypothesis has been confirmed for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .377$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .142$ .

The regression equation is the following:

$$\text{Autonomy} = 17.421 - .139 * \text{Self-enhancing humor}$$

Testing the 9th hypothesis: Aggressive Humor predicts statistically significant negative the human autonomy.

The hypothesis has been confirmed for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .439$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .193$ .

According the results after testing the hypothesis no. 9, the regression equation is the following:

$$\text{Autonomy} = 27,176 + -.268 * \text{Aggressive Humor}$$

Hence, the hypothesis has been confirmed and the Aggressive humor is statistically significant predictor for the human autonomy ( $p < .05$ ).

Testing the 10th hypothesis: Affiliate Humor predicts statistically significant the control.

The hypothesis has been confirmed for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .635$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .403$ .

Applying the regression model, the p value for the predictor was  $p < .05$  and the Affiliate Humor predict the control variable. The regression equation is the following:

Control =10.63+.407\* Affiliate Humor

Testing the 11th hypothesis: Aggressive Humour predicts negative statistically significant the personal growth.

The hypothesis has been confirmed for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .448$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .201$ .

The p value for the predictor was  $p < .05$  and the Aggressive Humor predicts negative the Personal growth. The regression equation is the following:

Personal growth =29.28-.307\* Aggressive Humor

Testing the 12th hypothesis: Aggressive Humour predict negative statistically significant the purpose in life.

The hypothesis has been confirmed for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .330$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .109$ .

Applying the regression model the p value for the predictor was  $p < .05$  and the Aggressive Humor predict negative statistically significant the purpose in life. The regression equation is the following:

Purpose in life =26.62-.209\*Aggressive Humor

Testing the 13th hypothesis: Affiliative Humor predicts positive statistically significant the purpose in life.

The hypothesis has been confirmed for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .397$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .158$ .

The p value for the predictor was  $p < .05$  and the Aggressive Humour predict negative statistically significant the purpose in life. According the coefficients table the regression equation is the following:

Purpose in life =15.04+.256\* Affiliative Humor

Testing the 14th hypothesis: Self-Enhancing humor predicts positive statistically significant the Purpose in life.

The hypothesis has been confirmed for  $p < .05$ ,  $R = .511$  and  $R \text{ Square} = .261$ .

The p value for the predictor was  $p < .05$  and the Self-Enhancing humor predicts positive statistically significant the purpose in life. Hence, the regression equation is the following:

Purpose in life =16.32+.195\* Self-Enhancing humor

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions are based on the research results but also on the international studies findings.

Hence the correlation hypotheses were confirmed but, besides these hypotheses more correlation has been confirmed as between the Humor styles and Well-being Facets and Emotions and Life Satisfaction. In this way the scientific studies presented in the introduction support these findings (Yue et al., 2017; Ford, McCreight, & Richardson, 2014; Martin et al., 2003; Schermer et al. 2019; Hofstein, 2005).



This study findings evidence that Aggressive Humour predicts statistically significant negative the human autonomy, the control, the personal growth and the purpose in life. Hence, the Aggressive humor can be an indicator of dissatisfaction and negative emotions. In this way, the individuals should receive psychological conciliation and may be introduced in a counselling program in order to develop positive affects, positive thoughts and positive relations in the future.

Another findings of this study evidence that Affiliative Humour predicts positive statistically significant the human autonomy, and purpose in life and also, the Self-enhancing humour predicts positive statistically significant the level of human autonomy and purpose in life.

These results are supported by the international findings (Kuiper, 2016; Sirigatti et al., 2014; Torres-Marín et al.; 2017; Salavera, Usán, & Jarie, 2018).

Further studies should focus on Humor styles related with depression, on-line school activities, work overload, anxiety, isolation and many other variables.

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