Chapter 9
Mental Well-Being in Iran: The Importance of Comprehensive Well-Being in Understanding the Linkages of Personality and Values

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In line with the theme of this book, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight the major findings in the field of well-being in Iran. Obviously, it is difficult to do a comprehensive review of a field as broad as well-being in such a dynamic culture. Therefore, this chapter focuses on some selected streams of research. Iranian and western findings are compared in order to draw conclusions and to summarize the Iranian experience. This chapter begins with a review of western conceptualizations of well-being and proceeds with proposing an account of the concept of *the good life* in Islam, with reference to Islamic texts. I argue that the distinction made by western scholars between eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of well-being is applicable to Iranian-Islamic culture in its generality. I then review a few areas of well-being research in Iran. Attention is then directed to some contributions of well-being research in Iran and to the ongoing debates in the field. I argue that the initial Iranian experience with western conceptualizations and scales of well-being has been relatively successful and can be considered as a good first step in this area of research.

Western Conceptualization of Mental Well-Being: Hedonic and Eudaimonic Aspects

It is impossible to map out the entire field of well-being research. Here, I will focus on the distinction between two different perspectives in the study of well-being: hedonic and eudaimonic. The distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being has repeatedly proved informative and has been held by many to be theoretically and empirically warranted (e.g., see Keyes and Annas 2009; Keyes et al. 2002; Ryan and Deci 2001; Ryan et al. 2008; Waterman et al. 2008). The primary

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difference between eudaimonic and hedonic definitions of well-being is that the former is premised on positive functioning and the latter on positive feeling (Keyes and Annas 2009).

Under hedonic theory, well-being is equated with hedonic pleasure or happiness. "Indeed, the predominant view among hedonic psychologists is that well-being consists of subjective happiness and concerns the experience of pleasure versus displeasure broadly construed to include all judgments about the good/bad elements of life" (Ryan and Deci 2001, p. 144). Most research within so-called hedonic psychology have used an assessment of subjective well-being. Subjective well-being (SWB) is generally operationalized as both a predominance of positive over negative affect (i.e., affect balance) and a global satisfaction with life (Diener 1984). In other words, a person is said to have high SWB if that person reports that life is satisfying, experiences frequent pleasant affect, and infrequently experiences unpleasant affect (Diener and Lucas 1999).

Eudaimonic theory, alternatively, draws on virtue ethics. Virtue ethics is an ethical theory that takes virtue as a primary aspect of well-being and asserts that the central question of ethics "How should I live?" can be construed as "What kind of person should I be?" (Bunnin and Yu 2004). This approach to ethics can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers, including Aristotle. "Virtue ethics is a term of art, initially introduced to distinguish an approach in normative ethics which emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to an approach which emphasizes duties or rules (deontology) or one which emphasizes the consequences of actions (utilitarianism)" (Hursthouse 1999, p. 1). This approach locates the origin of ethics in our natural desires and inclinations. According to Devettere (2002), virtue ethics posits that an object functions well or poorly depending on whether or not it achieves its appropriate *telos*, or ends. Almost all versions of virtue ethics hold that our desires aim ultimately at an overriding good, or eudaimonia (i.e., *good fate* or *happiness*). The overriding good is the most important good that makes our lives good on the whole. Humans achieve eudaimonia "whenever the physical, psychological, interpersonal, social, and political aspects of their lives are functioning well and harmoniously… Embedded in their nature are numerous unrealized capabilities or capacities, and they function well when they actualize their innate natural capabilities that make their lives go well" (Devettere 2002, p. 22).

The eudemonistic view maintains that happiness cannot be equated with hedonia. The overriding good cannot be pleasure. Indeed, "happiness in ancient ethical thought is not a matter of feeling good or being pleased; it is not a feeling or emotion at all. It is your life as a whole which is said to be happy or not, and so discussions of happiness are discussions of the happy life" (Annas 2000, pp. 40–41). Annas elucidates why pleasure cannot be what ancient ethicists had in mind while formulating eudaimonia:

> [O]ne point is clear right from the start … Happiness is having a happy life—it applies to your life overall. Pleasure, however, is more naturally taken to be something episodic, something you can feel now and not later. It is something you experience as we perform the activities which make up your life. You can be enjoying a meal, a conversation, even life one moment and not the next; but you cannot, in the ancient way of thinking, be happy one moment and not the next, since happiness applies to your life as a whole. (p. 42)

Virtue ethicists, instead, emphasize the role of virtue in living a eudaimonic life. Eudaimonia is the person's activity that is explicated in terms of living virtuously (Keyes and Annas 2009). In other words, as Solomon and Martin (2004) put it, eudaimonia is a life of activity in accordance with virtue. "A virtue is a disposition that makes us good as a human being in that it makes us perform our functions well" (Hooft 2006, p. 58).

In line with the philosophical tradition of eudaimonism, positive psychologists adhering to the eudemonistic view consider well-being to consist of more than just hedonic pleasure, suggesting that people's reports of happiness (or of being positively affective and satisfied), although beneficial in its turn, do not necessarily mean that they are functioning psychologically and socially well. Eudaimonic view is concerned with living well and actualizing one's human potential (Deci and Ryan 2008).

Some psychologists have tried to formulate eudaimonia. Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being, for example, falls into the eudaimonic tradition. Her model stems from extensive literature aimed at defining positive psychological functioning (e.g., the humanistic and existential theories). She tried to integrate these scattered formulations into a multidimensional model of positive psychological functioning, which encompasses the points of convergence in the previous formulations. The model resulting from this distillation contains six components: "positive evaluations of oneself and one's past life (Self-Acceptance), a sense of continued growth and development as a person (Personal Growth), the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful (Purpose in Life), the possession of quality relations with others (Positive Relations With Others), the capacity to effectively manage one's life and surrounding world (Environmental Mastery), and a sense of self-determination (Autonomy)" (Ryff and Keyes 1995, p. 720). (For other conceptualizations of eudaimonia by western authors, see Ryan et al. 2008; Vitterso et al. 2010; and Waterman et al. 2008).

Social Components of Human Functioning

According to Keyes and Shapiro (2004), what has been missing in the well-being literature is the recognition that individuals may evaluate the quality of their lives and personal functioning against social criteria. Keyes' (1998) brief review shows that the distinction between public and private life has pervaded social psychological theory. He argues that the private and public life are two potential sources of life challenges, with possibly distinct consequences for judging a well-lived life. Despite this distinction, the "leading conceptions of adult functioning portray well-being as a primarily private phenomenon" (Keyes 1998, p.121) and emphasize private features of well-being. That is, according to Keyes (2002), measures of hedonic well-being often identify individuals' satisfaction, or positive affect, with *life overall* but rarely with facets of their social lives. Dimensions of psychological well-being are also intrapersonal reflections of an individual's adjustment to and outlook on

their life. Only one of the six scales of psychological well-being (positive relations with others) reflects the ability to build and maintain intimate, trusting, interpersonal relationship (Keyes 2002). But "individuals remain embedded in social structures and communities, and face countless social tasks and challenges" (Keyes 1998, p. 122). Accordingly, Keyes asserts that there is more to functioning than psychological well-being. He believes that to understand optimal functioning and mental health, social scientists should also investigate individuals' social well-being.

Keyes' (1998) multidimensional model of social well-being is an attempt to conceptualize and assess the social aspect of well-being. This model falls into the eudaimonic perspective and addresses social aspects of human functioning. The model consists of five dimensions that indicate whether and to what degree individuals are functioning well in their social world:

> [S]ocial acceptance is a favorable view of human nature and a feeling of comfort with other people; social actualization is the belief in the evolution of society and the sense that society has potential that is being realized through its institutions and citizens; social contribution is the evaluation of one's value to society; social coherence is the perception of the quality, organization, and operation of the social world and includes a concern for knowing about the world; and social integration is the extent to which people feel they have something in common with others who constitute their social reality (e.g., their neighborhood), as well as the degree to which they feel that they belong to their communities and society. (Robitschek and Keyes 2009, p. 323)

Extant findings regarding the correlates of social well-being confirm the validity and usefulness of this multifaceted model of social well-being. The social well-being scale correlates with variables extracted from earlier formulations of successful aging (e.g., generativity in Erikson's model of human development, Keyes and Ryff 1998), a set of variables reflecting positive functioning in the context of community in which community psychologists are interested (e.g., psychological sense of community, Cicognani et al. 2008; Joshanloo et al. 2006a, b), other aspects of well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, Joshanloo and Ghaedi 2009; Joshanloo and Nosratabadi 2009), and some positive personality traits (e.g., self-efficacy, Joshanloo et al. 2006a, b).

Complete Mental Health

It is important to note that although the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being are theoretically and empirically distinguishable, many believe that both components of well-being should be included in the research designs, in tandem, to gain a full picture of a well-lived life (Keyes and Annas 2009). Theoretically, feeling and functioning are distinct, yet overlapping. Not surprisingly, empirical investigations suggest that there is overlap between the experience of hedonia and eudaimonia (e.g., see Kashdan et al. 2008). Ryan and Deci (2001) assert that "evidence from a number of investigators has indicated that well-being is probably best conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes aspects of both the hedonic and eudaimonic

conceptions" (p. 148). As Strumpfer (2006) pointed out, such a conception would clearly fit well into Keyes' (2002, 2005a) *complete mental health* model. According to this model, each dimension of well-being (hedonic, psychological, and social) represents an important domain of study in itself. Thus, all these scales should be collectively employed to measure the presence and absence of mental health.

Keyes (2002) proposes a mental health continuum ranging from flourishing, moderate, to languishing. Flourishing individuals have high levels on both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Languishing individuals have low levels on both types of well-being. Finally, individuals who are neither flourishing nor languishing in life are diagnosed as moderately mentally healthy. These individuals either have moderate levels of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being or have high level of one and low level of the other. In several studies, Keyes and his colleagues have shown that anything less than flourishing (scoring high on both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being) "is associated with greater burden to self and society" (Keyes and Annas 2009). Results of several studies show that missed days of work, cutbacks in the amount of work, limitations of activities of daily living, prevalence of cardiovascular disease, average number of chronic physical health conditions, and the like are lowest among flourishing individuals, increased among moderately mentally healthy individuals, and highest in languishing individuals (Keyes 2002, 2004, 2005a, b). Findings of another study by Keyes et al. (2002) indicate that when both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being are present in an individual, they complement each other. However, when one is absent, they compensate for each other.

The conceptualizations of well-being outlined above are proposed by western psychologists. Considering the differences between non-western countries and the West, it is not wise to take the utility of these conceptualizations and scales for granted in non-western countries before theoretical and empirical investigations are undertaken. In the sections that follow, I will briefly introduce Iranian culture and closely examine what the Iranian concept of the good life might be like. This analysis is aimed at shedding some light on the question: Is it fruitful or destructive to apply western concepts and scales of well-being to a country like Iran?

The Concept of Mental Well-Being in Iran

Iran is a Muslim country in southwestern Asia, with a population of more than 70 millions. Iran is not an Arab country, and the official language of the country is Persian. Relative to North American and northern European societies, collectivistic values are salient in Iranian social life (Safdar et al. 2006).

Ninety-seven percent of Iran is Muslim (Clawson and Rubin 2005), and the country is currently ruled by a theocratic government. Iranian government has tried to Islamize the population during the last few decades. The constitution of Iran states that no laws, rights, or policies should contradict Islam (Tamadonfar 2001). The foreign policy of the Iranian government is generally anti-western, and such a policy has led to the country's isolation from the West.

A substantial majority of Iranians (about 89%) are Muslims of the Shiite sect, a sect different from Sunni, to which a great majority of Muslims (e.g., most of Arabs) belong. Zoroastrianism (the ancient pre-Islamic religion of Persia) has influenced the Islamic practice and faith among Iranians on a noticeable level (e.g., Stepaniants 2002; Romance 2007). However, the Iranian version of Islam (i.e., Shiism) is identical to mainstream Islam in terms of the fundamental tenets (e.g., belief in the oneness of God, belief in the resurrection day, the belief that the prophet Muhammad is the messenger of God, and that Quran is God's words).

These characteristics of Iranian culture indicate that Iran is different in political regime and culture from most of the countries from which scientific psychological studies come. Accordingly, the relevance of the western notion of the good life to Iran cannot be taken for granted without theoretical and empirical studies supporting this claim. Below, I propose an account of the concept of the good life in Islam with reference to Islamic texts. However, it should be borne in mind that Islam is not the only influential ideology in Iran. Other influential schools of thought are Iranian pre-Islamic religions and philosophies (e.g., Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism), Iranian post-Islamic philosophy, and Persian mysticism which have all influenced the Iranian popular religiosity. However, dealing with all these schools of thought is beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter and is left for future work.

Mental Health in Islam

> I saw a holy man on the seashore who had been wounded by a tiger. No medicine could relieve his pain; he suffered much but he nevertheless constantly thanked God the most high, saying: "Praise be to Allah [=God] that I have fallen into a calamity and not into sin."
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> > If that beloved Friend [=God] decrees me to be slain
> > I shall not say that moment that I grieve for life
> > Or say: What fault has thy slave committed?
> > My grief will be for having offended thee.[1]
>
> —Sa'adi, The Gulistan [The Rose Garden] of Sa'adi (1259 CE)

Islamic view of humankind is dualistic, as humans possess both a perishable body and an everlasting soul (Haque 2004a, b). Islam posits that one of the basic spiritual needs of people is to worship a higher power (Sajedi 2008a). Also, according to Islam, we have two lives, one in this world and one in the hereafter. Our life in the present world is far less important than our eternal life in the afterworld (Quran 6:32). The Islamic concept of the good life needs to take these two important points into account. That is to say, this concept should be formulated in such way that it

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[1] Story 12 of Chapter 2, "The Gulistan of Sa'adi" written by one of the most famous and popular Iranian poets Sa'adi. English translation obtained from: http://enel.ucalgary.ca/People/far/hobbies/iran/Golestan/gulistan.pdf

guarantees the satisfaction of individuals' spiritual needs and their happiness in both lives. Clearly, such a concept of mental health and the good life needs to go beyond the absence of mental illness. Indeed, in Islam, mental health is not only the absence of mental disorders but also the presence of positive qualities and virtues (Abou el Azayem and Hedayat-Diba 1994; Haque 2004a, b; Smither and Khordandi 2009). The Islamic view of the good life is consistent with positive psychology's viewpoint in this regard.

The Islamic notion of the good life is more consistent with eudaimonism than hedonism. Islamic texts indicate that to live a good life, one should have faith and put that faith into practice. "[i]t is believed that by following Islamic principles, Muslims can achieve and enjoy the four ingredients of a healthy and balanced life, namely, physical, social, mental, and spiritual health" (Abou el Azayem and Hedayat-Diba 1994, p. 49). All Muslims are obliged to have faith in some principal beliefs of Islam (belief in oneness of God, belief in the resurrection, etc.). Furthermore, Islam is a comprehensive way of life. It covers all aspects of life (individual, spiritual, economic, social, political, and family). Muslims believe that religion cannot be separated from any little aspect of life (Hamdan 2007; Pridmore and Pasha 2004). Only having faith in these beliefs and living based on the ordinances of Islam in all aspects of life can lead to the satisfaction of individuals' spiritual needs and the actualization of their potential. About those who believe and keep their duty to Allah, the Quran (10:64) says "[t]heirs are good tidings in the life of the world and in the hereafter...."[2]

According to Islam, humans are the product of the unification of spirit and body. God has breathed spirit into humans' material body. This divine spirit needs to be actualized. One can freely choose to actualize the divine spirit within oneself by following the ordinances of Islam or choose to indulge in material pleasures. Attainment of a virtuous lifestyle requires relentless patience and constant struggle against our lower nature (Akhtar 2008).

According to Islam, when a child is born, it carries within it a natural belief in God. This natural belief is called the *fitrah*. This innate disposition is considered to be a source of guidance, telling humans when they are wrong (Haque 2004a, b). In a sense, we are preprogrammed to worship God and follow his commands. But, due to environmental pressures, we forget our true nature. Humans are obliged to rediscover their fitrah and follow its guidance. The Quran says (30:30–31):

> So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright—the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not—Turning unto Him (only); and be careful of your duty unto Him and establish worship, and be not of those who ascribe partners (unto Him).

Obviously, such a viewpoint fits well with the eudaimonic view, which emphasizes actualizing human potential and satisfaction of true human needs.

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[2] All the English translation of the Quran verses are obtained from http://www.quranexplorer.com

Islam's emphasis on eudaimonia does not mean that positive emotions and pleasures are not legitimate in Islam. Instead, it holds that by adhering to the Islamic lifestyle, Muslims experience many different positive emotions and pleasures (vitality, peacefulness, gladness, contentment, gratitude, joy, etc.), both in this world and in the hereafter. For example, the Quran says (13:28) "[v]erily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." Islam holds that one should not pursue hedonistic pleasures as the primary goal of life. In fact, positive emotions and pleasure are considered necessary in Islam, but they are regarded secondary and are placed after eudaimonistic strivings. That is, Muslims should not choose for themselves the goods of this lower life (i.e., evil pleasures of this world) as the goal of life (Q 7:169), since "naught is the life of the world save a pastime…" (Q 6:32). Thus, attempts to maximize positive emotions and pleasures and minimize negative emotions and pains, if not accompanied by eudaimonic strivings, are discouraged.

As it is evident in the excerpt that opened this section, one of the Iranian foremost poets, Sa'adi, finds good reasons to praise a pious man who suffered a long-lasting incurable pain but constantly thanked God because God has destined him to suffer from a calamity and not to a life of committing sin. In other words, although this calamity undermines the hedonic balance of the pious man's life, since it does not interfere with living a virtuous life (as understood by the pious man), he is grateful to God for it. Iranian literature is replete with such stories and sagas, which try to persuade people to choose eudaimonic standards for assessing a well-lived life. But we should also note that gratitude is classified as a positive emotion, which has recently received much attention in positive psychology (e.g., Emmons and McCullough 2004). Thus, Sa'adi is covertly suggesting that even in face of misery and calamity, living a virtuous life (e.g., to be satisfied with God's will and be grateful no matter what happens in one's life) can neutralize the anhedonia caused by misery and replace it with relatively positive emotions (in this case, gratitude).

In sum, no mental health model is adequate in Islam unless it takes eudaimonistic aspects into account. In fact, the most perfect model is one that takes both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects into account. It can be concluded that the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being and the necessity of both of them in conceptualizing and assessing well-being in Islamic cultures seem to be theoretically warranted. However, there appears to be some variation in the dimensions of eudaimonic and hedonic aspects between western and Islamic cultures or the amount of emphasis that each puts on a single dimension of well-being. For example, whereas autonomy is emphasized more as a basic human need in western culture, the need for worship is emphasized more as a basic need by Islam (Sajedi 2008a).

A detailed discussion of individual symptoms of well-being (positive relations with others, purpose in life, social integration, social contribution, life satisfaction, etc.) and their relevance to Islamic faith is beyond the focus of this chapter. The interested reader is referred to the existing articles and books published by scholars and psychologists in many diverse languages. For example, in an article in Persian, Sajedi (2008a, b) argues that Islam provides Muslims with the mechanisms needed to achieve many high standards posited by western notions of mental health. He cites tens of sayings of Islamic religious leaders and of the Quran to show that

many common themes in western models of well-being (e.g., spirituality, positive relations with others, social interest, meaning in life, self-knowledge) are highly valued in Islam. As another example, in an interesting study by Dahlsgaard et al. (2005), philosophical and religious traditions in Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were investigated to find common core values. The authors found six core strengths that were valued in all these traditions: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence. They concluded that "there is convergence across time, place, and intellectual tradition about certain core virtues" (p. 210). Given that these universal values predispose individuals to the good life, these findings indicate that living a virtuous life has some common characteristics, no matter which faith it is lived by.

Especially during the last decade, Persian translations of western scales of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being have been widely used in Iran. Therefore, we can draw on existing empirical literature to evaluate the utility of these scales in Iran. Below, I will provide a brief review of the findings of well-being studies in Iran.

Well-Being Research in Iran

Iranian researchers have used many western scales in their work to assess different aspects of well-being. These studies can be divided into two categories. In the first category, the construct validity and reliability of the translations of these scales are examined. In the second category, the predictors of different aspects of well-being are examined. I will return to the second category of research (specifically, two groups of predictors: personality traits and values) later in this chapter. First, I will briefly review the first category of research, which focuses on the investigation of the validity and reliability of western well-being scales in Iranian samples.

Validity and Reliability of Western Well-Being Scales in Iran

Validity and reliability of some western scales of well-being have been examined in Iran. For example, Joshanloo et al. (2006a) examined the factor structure of 13 symptoms of well-being (including six aspects of Ryff's *psychological well-being* model, five aspects of Keyes' *social well-being* model, *life satisfaction*, and *positive affect*) based on Keyes' (2002) comprehensive model of mental health, described above. Using a sample of 205 Iranian university students, they showed that the three-factor model (viewing psychological, social, and emotional well-being as three separate but correlated factors) showed the best fit to the data. Although, the fit indices were not excellent, some minor modification improved the model's fit.

Shokri et al. (2008) examined the factor structure of 3-, 9-, and 14-item Persian versions of Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being in Iranian university students ($N = 374$). Results of the confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the

six-dimensional model of psychological well-being (hypothesizing six distinct yet correlated factors) showed an acceptable fit to the data across all three versions. In that study, the content validity of the items of Ryff's scales was confirmed by some of the professors of psychology at one of the Iranian universities. Interestingly, the six-factor structure of different versions of this scale has not been confirmed in some other countries (e.g., Springer et al. 2006), while the results of this factor analysis conducted in Iran supports the factor structure proposed by Ryff (1989). In another study, Bayani et al. (2008) used an Iranian student sample to examine the reliability and convergent validity of an 84-item version of Ryff's psychological well-being scales. They found 2-month test-retest reliability coefficients greater than 0.71 for six subscales of this scale. They also found that Cronbach's alphas of the six subscales ranged from 0.57 to 0.76. Finally, their results demonstrated that this scale was positively correlated with the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Oxford Happiness Inventory, and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale.

Bakhshi et al. (2009) examined the construct validity of positive and negative affect scale (Mroczek and Kolarz 1998) in Iranian undergraduates. Their results indicated that scales of positive and negative affect had good reliability and convergent validity. In addition, unidimensional factor structure of positive affect scale was supported by both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. As for the negative affect scale, while exploratory factor analysis supported the unidimensional factor structure of this scale, confirmatory factor analysis yielded unacceptable fit indices.

Bakhshipur and Dozhkam (2006) applied confirmatory factor analysis to examine the factor structure of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al. 1988) in a clinical sample of 255 young adults. They found that fit indices for the model that viewed positive and negative affect factors as two separate but correlated factors were superior to those of the single factor model, although the two-factor model's fit indices were lower than the rule-of-thumb recommendation provided in the literature.

The validity of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985) has also been examined in two studies in Iran. Bayani et al. (2007) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 and a 1-month test-retest reliability of 0.70 for this scale. They also found that this scale had a correlation of 0.71 with the Oxford Happiness Inventory. Joshanloo and Daemi (in press) investigated the construct validity of this scale. Their results indicated that the Satisfaction with Life Scale had a one-factor structure (as proposed by Diener et al. 1985) and acceptable reliability and convergent validity with Iranian student samples.

Hatami et al. (2010) examined the construct validity and reliability of the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS; Huebner 1994) using a sample of 430 students in grades 6–12 in Iran. They applied exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses in their study. They found that the pattern matrix of this Persian adaptation was, by and large, consistent with previous investigations of the MSLSS in other countries. They concluded that this Persian adaptation of the MSLSS offers a reliable and valid means of assessing Iranian middle and high school students' life satisfaction.

The validity and reliability of the Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle et al. 1989) have been investigated in a few studies in Iran (e.g., Alipour and Agah Heris 2007; Alipour, and Noorbala 1999; Liaghatdar et al. 2008). Findings of these studies indicate that this scale has satisfactory reliability and convergent validity in Iranian samples, but its factor structure appears to be different from that obtained in other countries. In one of these studies, in order to examine the content validity, a panel of 10 psychologists and psychiatrists were asked to review the items of this scale. All experts confirmed the ability of this scale to assess happiness in Iran (Alipour and Noorbala 1999).

Joshanloo and Ghaedi (2009) examined the psychometric properties of personal growth initiative scale (Robitschek 1998, 1999) in an Iranian university student sample. They found that the internal consistency of the scale was 0.87. Results of the confirmatory factor analyses showed that this scale had a unidimensional factor structure in the sample used. Correlations between this scale and convergent validity scales (positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and social well-being) were significant and in the expected direction. These results indicate acceptable reliability and validity for the Persian translation of this scale for Iranian university students.

Altogether, the findings of the validation studies done on translations of western well-being scales in Iran indicate that most of these scales are reliable and valid. Most of the Iranian researchers who have conducted these studies assert that these scales can be used in Iranian samples with confidence. The factor structure of these scales, however, has been found in some cases to be different from western versions. Although some might say this is unacceptable, we should bear in mind that this is not specific to Iran. It is sometimes possible that two-factor analytical studies in a single country, on a single scale, yield different results.

Nevertheless, this stream of research can be improved in some ways. Almost all of these studies have used student samples. Future research should examine the validity and reliability of these scales in adult samples. Furthermore, in some cases, it is better to develop some short forms for western scales to be used in Iranian samples by eliminating some items. Some individual items might need further refinement or replacement. Past research indicates that some items of these scales function worse than the rest in Iran. Some statistical techniques, such as factor analysis and Item Response Theory analysis, should be applied to examine how well each individual item functions with Iranian samples and examine the differences in the way each item functions in Iran and other cultures.

In some cases, it seems to be fruitful to add items to the scales to capture some aspects of the construct which are relevant in Iranian culture but are not captured by the original scale. This needs to be done based on some qualitative research and deep theoretical analyses. Finally, some dimensions of well-being, which are relevant to Iranian culture but are not captured by the western scales, should be identified, and new scales should be developed to tap into them. For instance, one likely candidate is spiritual well-being. The Islamic version of spiritual well-being (the satisfaction of the need for worship and surrender to God, having a constructive and positive relationship with God, etc.) should be theoretically and empirically examined to see

if it qualifies as an emic aspect of well-being to be applied along with the existing western scales. All these steps may require lots of effort and time, but certainly they will be fruitful for Iranian well-being studies.

In the section that follows, I will turn to the second category of well-being studies in Iran, which focuses on the investigation of various predictors of different aspects of well-being. Due to space constraints, I will focus on two sets of predictors: personality traits and values. First presented is a brief review of the findings from different countries for each set of predictors, followed by a short review of Iranian studies.

Big Five Personality Domains and Self-Esteem as Predictors of Well-Being in Iran

In their recent review of SWB literature, Lucas and Diener (2008) asserted the following:

> [A]fter decades of research on SWB researchers have often arrived at what to some seems like a startling conclusion: The most important factor in determining a person's SWB appears to be the personality with which he or she is born. (p. 801)

Empirical research has shown that external factors (health, income, etc.) have only a modest impact on SWB reports (Diener et al. 1999). Research instead shows that SWB is often strongly correlated with stable personality traits (Diener et al. 2003). In terms of the Big Five personality domains, extraversion (E) and neuroticism (N) have been found to be the strongest predictors of SWB in many countries (for a very brief review, see Schimmack et al. 2002). However, the meta-analyses by DeNeve and Cooper (1998) and Steel et al. (2008) indicated that two other personality traits, namely, agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C), predispose individuals toward SWB as well. Openness to experience (O) does not appear to be a strong and consistent predictor of SWB. It has been suggested to be linked positively to both positive affect and negative affect (McCrae and Costa 1991).

Psychological dimensions of eudaimonic well-being have also been linked with personality domains. Schmutte and Ryff's (1997) findings revealed consistent linkages between the domains of personality and psychological well-being. Environmental mastery demonstrated strong negative links with N, as did purpose in life and autonomy, to a lesser degree. Self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and purpose in life were linked with E and C. Personal growth was related to O. Positive relations with others was linked with A and, to a lesser degree, with E. Finally, autonomy was linked with E, C, and O but most strongly with N. Schmutte and Ryff concluded that the "dimensions of psychological well-being are distinct from, yet meaningfully influenced by, personality" (p. 557). One important finding is that O tends to correlate only with eudaimonic aspects of well-being. This is in line with Keyes et al. (2002) results, indicating that those with high levels of eudaimonic well-being (as assessed by psychological well-being scales), but low levels of SWB,

were distinguished from their opposite counterpart (high SWB/low psychological well-being) by their high levels of O.

Eudaimonic well-being researchers tend to adopt a more moderate stance on the issue of the relation between personality, environment, and well-being. For example, in her review of the related literature, Ryff (2008) finds good reasons to view both personality traits and environmental factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, gender, marital status, and ethnicity) as operative in understanding variation in well-being. She further asserts that "the comparative advantage ascribed to traits appears premature…" (p. 409).

In sum, the brief review of western findings presented above points to the fact that all the Big Five domains have important implications for well-being. Another remarkable point is that O tends to correlate only with eudaimonic aspects of well-being. From the hedonic point of view, thus, a happy person is most likely to be a person who has high scores on E, C, and A and a low score on N. From a eudaimonic point of view, however, all personality domains, including O, are considered components of a mentally healthy personality.

A number of narrower personality variables are correlated with the components of SWB (see DeNeve and Cooper 1998 for a review). Self-esteem, for example, has been found to be a strong correlate of SWB in many past studies. Campbell (1981) found a correlation of 0.55 between self-esteem and life satisfaction in a US sample. Diener and Diener (1995) found a correlation of 0.47 between self-esteem and life satisfaction in college student samples from 31 countries (see also Kwan et al. 1997; Lucas et al. 1996; Zhang and Leung 2002, for more evidence). Self-esteem has also been suggested by researchers to be the mediator of the relation between personality traits and well-being. Kwan et al. (1997) study shows that for both Chinese and American individuals, self-esteem mediates the relations between four personality traits (E, N, C, and O) and life satisfaction. In a British sample, Furnham and Cheng (2000) found that the influence of E and N on happiness was mediated by self-esteem. In addition to the mediatory role this variable plays in the relationship between personality and SWB, self-esteem also has been found to mediate the influence of a social belief domain (i.e., social cynicism) on life satisfaction (Lai et al. 2007).

Altogether, previous research in different countries indicates that self-esteem is a consistent and relatively strong predictor of aspects of well-being, albeit more so in individualistic cultures. An important issue that needs to be addressed is whether or not we should expect these findings to be replicated in Iran. Below, I provide a brief review which should shed some light on this issue.

Along with validation studies, Iranian researchers have used western well-being scales in many studies in order to find predictors of well-being in Iran. Some studies have investigated the personality predictors of well-being. For example, Joshanloo and Nosratabadi's (2009) study using an Iranian student sample showed that E, N, C, and A could significantly discriminate among the three levels of mental health continuum (i.e., flourishing, moderately mentally healthy, and languishing) based on Keyes' (2002) model of mental health. In another study on Iranian university students (Joshanloo and Rastegar 2007), it was found that eudaimonic well-being

(as measured by scales of meaning in life and personal growth) was significantly predicted by C in females and by C, A, and E in males. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis revealed that self-esteem significantly predicted eudaimonic well-being scores over and above the Big Five traits in both sexes.

To the present knowledge, the only examination of the relation between the Big Five personality traits and social well-being is that of Joshanloo et al. (2012). Participants of this study included 236 undergraduates at the University of Tehran. Findings revealed that, among the Big Five personality domains, N was inversely related to social acceptance, social contribution, and social coherence. Interestingly, C was positively related to social contribution, and O was positively related to social contribution and social coherence. Also, A was related to social acceptance and social contribution. Finally, no significant correlation was observed between E and facets of social well-being. Joshanloo et al. (2007), using a sample of Iranian university students, found that high and low levels of social well-being can be significantly discriminated by N and A in females and by E and A in males. The results of hierarchical regression showed that self-esteem significantly predicted social well-being scores over and above the Big Five traits. In another study on social well-being in an Iranian student sample (Joshanloo et al. 2006b), it was found that self-esteem predicted social well-being better than a number of community-related variables (i.e., perceived social support, psychological sense of community, identification with the community, and social participation) and self-efficacy.

The relation between hedonic aspects of well-being and personality domains has been examined in a few studies in Iranian samples. Joshanloo and Afshari's (2011) study with Iranian university students showed that the Big Five personality traits explained about 25% of the variance in life satisfaction scores. Among the Big Five traits, E and N were found to be the strongest correlates of life satisfaction. As well, O was not significantly correlated with life satisfaction. In addition, it was found that self-esteem significantly predicted life satisfaction over and above the Big Five personality traits. Findings also showed that self-esteem completely mediated the influence of conscientiousness and agreeableness on life satisfaction, while the influence of extraversion and neuroticism on life satisfaction was partially mediated by self-esteem. Haghighi et al. (2006) obtained similar results in Iran, with the exception that they found a significant moderate correlation between O and happiness (as assessed by the Oxford Happiness Inventory).

Moghanloo and Aguilar-Vafaie (2009) found that happiness (assessed by a single item) was significantly correlated with E, N, and C. Khanzade et al. (2007) found significant correlations between the Oxford Happiness Inventory and three scales of the Eysenck Personality Inventory. Extraversion was positively, and neuroticism and psychoticism were negatively, correlated with happiness. In another study, it was found that among the Big Five personality traits, N, E, and C significantly predicted hedonic balance in Iranian university students (Joshanloo et al. 2010). In addition, self-esteem predicted hedonic balance over and above the Big Five traits, while perceived social support failed to do so. Finally, in a study by Zaki (2008),

self-esteem was found to be a significant correlate ($r = 0.48$), of quality of life in Iran (as assessed by Missoula-Vitas Quality of Life Index, Byock and Merriman 1998).

In sum, the findings of studies conducted in Iran indicate that E and N are the strongest correlates of hedonic well-being and C and A are predictors of secondary importance. Furthermore, all five personality traits are significant predictors of eudaimonic (social and psychological) aspects of well-being. Moreover, self-esteem has been repeatedly found to be a strong predictor of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The patterns that have emerged in Iran in this particular line of research (the relation between personality traits and well-being) are mostly in line with the findings that have emerged in other countries, especially western ones.

Values and Well-Being in Iran

As Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) and Vansteenkiste et al. (2006), among others, have pointed out, two lines of research have been followed when examining the relation between values and well-being (see Sagiv et al. 2004, for a review). The main assumption of the first one is that pursuing *healthy* values contributes to well-being and pursuing *unhealthy* ones harms it. In other words, this line of research attempts to find direct effects of value priorities on well-being. Bilsky and Schwartz (1994), for example, suggest that conformity, security, and power values represent deficiency needs, and therefore, priority given to these values is expected to correlate negatively with well-being. Self-direction, universalism, benevolence, achievement, and stimulation, conversely, are classified as representing primarily growth needs, and therefore, pursuing them is expected to boost well-being (Bilsky and Schwartz 1994). These predictions receive partial support in Roccas et al. (2002) study showing that self-direction, stimulation, and universalism were positively, and power and conformity were inversely, related to positive affect. In five large and multicultural samples (two samples from the 2006 European Social Survey, two Basque samples, and a sample of immigrants in the Basque Country), Bobowik et al. (2011) found some support for these predictions. Their results indicate that hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction were weakly related to better well-being, while tradition, power, and conformity were weakly associated with lower well-being.

Findings, however, are sometimes at odds with these predictions. Sagiv and Schwartz (2000), for example, tried to investigate the direct relations between 10 basic values (based on the value theory developed by Schwartz 1992) and SWB. They concluded that "values have some direct influence on SWB. This influence is rather weak and it refers only to the affective aspect of well-being" (p. 186). Haslam et al. (2009) found that, in Australia, negative affect was significantly correlated with none of the values, and life satisfaction was only significantly correlated with stimulation. They also found a positive correlation between security and positive affect, which is inconsistent with the Sagiv and Schwartz's prediction.

Given its assumption that pursuing extrinsic values is detrimental to well-being, research investigating the relation between intrinsic and extrinsic values and well-being also falls into this line of research. Some researchers, self-determination theorists included, have shown that pursuing *intrinsic* values (e.g., self-acceptance and affiliation) benefits one's well-being. In contrast, pursuing *extrinsic* values (e.g., material success and fame) harms it (e.g., Kasser and Ahuvia 2002; Vansteenkiste et al. 2006).

The second line of research followed when examining the relation between values and well-being is focused on the fit between a person's value priorities and the values prevailing in that person's environment. This approach holds that such a fit between a person's values and those emphasized within his or her environment is crucial to a person's well-being. This model has been called congruency model (Sagiv et al. 2004), person-environment fit model (Triandis 2000), or cultural fit model (Lu 2006).

This model is premised on the fact that culture exists at multiple levels. It has been proposed that a distinction should be made between the cultural (or societal) and individual levels of analysis, and both levels should be taken into account (Lu 2006; Ratzlaff et al. 2000; Triandis 2000). In some cases, the results obtained at the two levels of analysis are at odds with each other. For example, it appears that while at the individual level, allocentrism (Triandis et al. 1985) is positively related to SWB, at the societal level, collectivism is negatively related to it (Triandis 2000). "Culture at the ecological level therefore describes mainstream average tendencies; it cannot describe all behaviors of all people in any culture" (Ratzlaff et al. 2000, p. 39). In other words, the individual cultural values of the people in a specific culture might be either congruent or discrepant with the larger societal culture (Lu 2006). Research shows that people differ in the extent to which they internalize existing orientations in a particular culture, as a part of self (e.g., Chirkov et al. 2005; see also Wan, and Chiu 2009). The cultural fit model assumes that to the extent that a person's personal values match the values emphasized in that person's culture, there is a good cultural fit which should boost well-being.

In line with the cultural fit model, and based on a model called *value-as-a-moderator model of SWB*, Oishi et al. (1999b) hypothesized that the relation between domain satisfaction and global life satisfaction would vary, depending on individuals' value orientation. The fundamental postulate of value-as-a-moderator model is that when making life satisfaction judgments, individuals weigh value-congruent domain satisfactions more heavily than value-incongruent domain satisfactions. Consistent with this prediction, Oishi and his colleagues found that value-congruent domain satisfaction was more strongly related to global life satisfaction than was value-incongruent domain satisfaction. For example, they found that satisfaction with social life was a strong predictor of global life satisfaction for those high in benevolence value and satisfaction with family life was a strong predictor for individuals high in conformity values. Their findings also revealed that within-individual variation of day-to-day satisfaction was strongly influenced by daily satisfaction with the most valued domain. For instance, achievement-oriented individuals tended to evaluate a day as good when they excelled in achievement domains. In another

study (including data from 39 nations), Oishi et al. (1999a) found support for the value-as-a-moderator model at the cultural level. They showed that, consistent with this model, satisfaction with esteem needs (e.g., the self and freedom) predicted global life satisfaction more strongly among people in individualistic nations than people in collectivistic nations.

In Sagiv and Schwartz's (2000) study, the cultural fit model was tested by comparing a small sample of psychology students with a small sample of business students on the assumption that within these two groups, opposing sets of values would be emphasized. Based on the findings, Sagiv and Schwartz concluded that "personal value priorities contribute significantly to subjective well-being above and beyond their modest direct effects. Congruity between people's values and their environment promotes well-being regardless of the particular values to which people ascribe importance" (p. 194).

Lu (2006) looked closely at the cultural fit model within three diverse samples from Taiwan and mainland China ($N = 581$). It was hypothesized that Chinese individual's degree of fit (or lack of discrepancy) between individual culture and societal culture (regarding beliefs in the independent self, the interdependent self, active control, and relationship harmony) would be positively related to SWB. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that Chinese individual's direction of cultural fit would have differential effects on SWB (i.e., being a modernist would promote SWB, whereas being a traditionalist would hinder SWB). Results indicated that the support for the first hypothesis (regarding the magnitude of cultural fit) in the samples used was quite limited. Some isolated effects of magnitude of discrepancy only within certain subgroups of the larger Chinese population were found. Furthermore, after using a Bonferroni correction, no significant correlation remained.

The second hypothesis (the direction of cultural fit), however, was partially supported. Cultural fit regarding the interdependent self and harmony beliefs apparently had no effect on SWB, whereas that regarding the independent self and active control beliefs did. Although findings indicated that people who were in accord with their societal culture generally had higher levels of well-being than those in discord, being a modernist was more advantageous than being a traditionalist. These findings suggest that the direction of cultural fit regarding independent self and active control beliefs is meaningful for SWB in these samples.

Some findings are at odds with the predictions of the cultural fit model. For instance, Kasser and Ahuvia (2002) investigated the relation between extrinsic, materialistic values and well-being in a sample of 92 business students in Singapore, where it is believed that extrinsic, materialistic values are highly supported. Their findings suggest that some types of values may be healthy or unhealthy no matter how congruent they are with the values supported by the environment. Likewise, Vansteenkiste et al. (2006), using a larger sample of business students, found that despite the match between their personal value orientation and the values emphasized within their environments, extrinsically oriented business students displayed lower psychological and physical well-being.

Research on cultural estrangement and its consequences for the individuals' well-being also falls into this line of research. Cultural estrangement is con-

ceptualized as discrepancies between personal value priorities and perceived societal values (Cozzarelli and Karafa 1998). According to the cultural fit model, cultural estrangement is expected to be inversely associated with indicators of mental health. The empirical findings supporting this expectation, however, are scant and inconsistent. Cozzarelli and Karafa (1998), using US samples, found cultural estrangement to be negatively correlated with meaning in life, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. In a British sample, nevertheless, Bernard et al. (2006) found that there was no significant relationship between cultural estrangement and a set of well-being scales (i.e., self-esteem, life satisfaction, and self-actualization).

A rather wide variety of well-being scales have been used in the past studies reviewed above, but generally, researchers have not taken into consideration the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being when choosing well-being scales. In addition, the distinction between the two aspects of eudaimonic well-being (social and psychological) also has been totally neglected. In none of the past studies has a social well-being scale been used. Furthermore, no study has been done on the relationship between values and well-being in southern Asia or the Middle East. Therefore, two recent studies were conducted to address limitations of previous research using two Iranian university student samples.

The first one examined the relations between values and aspects of well-being using a sample of 200 Iranian university students (Joshanloo and Ghaedi 2009). Schwartz value survey (Schwartz 1992) was used to assess 10 basic human values (i.e., self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism). Psychological and social well-being scales were used to assess the eudaimonic aspect of well-being, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the affect balance scale were used to assess the hedonic aspect of well-being.

Results revealed that regardless of the value types emphasized within the context, in this Iranian sample, achievement and tradition were significantly correlated with both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of well-being. Power, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, and conformity also were related only to eudaimonic aspects of well-being. Results of bivariate correlation analysis showed that a larger number of values were correlated with eudaimonic aspects of well-being (seven values) than its hedonic aspects (two values), and the correlations were stronger for eudaimonic aspects. Therefore, it can be concluded that values are more useful variables in predicting eudaimonic well-being than hedonic well-being in this sample. Considering the difference in value correlates of hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being observed in this study, it seems fruitful, and even necessary, to take the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being into account in future studies.

One important implication of this study for future well-being studies was the findings regarding the value correlates of social well-being. Self-direction was positively correlated with psychological well-being but negatively related to social well-being. In addition, power, conformity, and benevolence were not significantly correlated with other aspects of well-being but were significantly correlated with social well-being. It can be concluded that two aspects of eudaimonic well-being

(psychological and social) differentially relate to various values. Therefore, based on the results of this study, the distinction between psychological and social aspects of eudaimonic well-being is better to be taken into account in future studies.

One other noticeable finding was that in this Iranian sample, conformity was positively correlated with social well-being. This is inconsistent with Bilsky and Schwartz's (1994) hypothesis that conformity, security, and power values represent deficiency needs, and therefore, priority given to these values is expected to correlate negatively with well-being. That security value was unrelated to well-being in this Iranian sample is also inconsistent with this hypothesis. Yet, power was negatively correlated with social well-being and should be considered socially unhealthy. Thus, Bilsky and Schwartz's assumptions pertaining to healthy and unhealthy values, regardless of the values emphasized in the environment, do not appear to be fully applicable to this Iranian sample.

Some findings were inconsistent (while some others were consistent) with self-determination theory's prediction (e.g., Kasser and Ryan 1996) that pursing extrinsic, materialistic values relates to poorer well-being and pursuing intrinsic values leads to higher well-being. Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) suggest that self-direction, benevolence, and universalism values are intrinsic, and the power value is extrinsic. That power had a significant and negative relation to social well-being and benevolence correlated positively with social well-being in this sample was consistent with this hypothesis. However, universalism was inversely related to psychological well-being, and self-direction showed a rather mixed pattern of associations with different aspects of well-being. All in all, these findings cast doubt on the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values, as proposed by self-determination theorists, as a basis for relating values to well-being in this Iranian sample. However, it is noteworthy to mention that this study (using Schwartz value survey to measure values) was not an accurate test of Kasser and Ryan's (1996) hypothesis, since as Kasser and Ahuvia (2002) have pointed out, Schwartz value survey does not specifically measure extrinsic, materialistic values as Kasser and Ryans define them.

Altogether, these findings draw our attention to four important points. First, the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being should be taken into account in studies examining the relation between values and well-being. Second, the distinction between social and psychological well-being should be taken into account in such studies. Indeed, these findings suggest that there are some risks associated with overlooking the social aspects in well-being research. Third, these findings suggest that if we test the existing assumptions regarding the relation between values and well-being, applying more comprehensive scales of well-being (assessing hedonic, psychological, and social well-being), many of the prior assumptions regarding the relation between values and well-being will turn out to be inadequate. Finally, these findings suggest that there are both similarities and differences between Iran and other countries in terms of healthy and unhealthy values. Therefore, based on these findings and those reviewed earlier, any claim of universality in the relation between values and well-being should be made with caution.

In another study (Joshanloo 2010), the cultural fit model was tested in an Iranian student sample ($N = 208$). Building on the studies done within this model,

this study sought to examine the relation between cultural estrangement and aspects of well-being. As mentioned earlier, cultural estrangement has been found to correlate negatively with some indicators of mental health in a few US samples (Cozzarelli and Karafa 1998), while it has been found to be unrelated to well-being measures in two British samples (Bernard et al. 2006).

In this study, cultural estrangement life satisfaction, hedonic balance, and psychological and social well-being scales were used. Findings revealed that, in this Iranian sample, cultural estrangement was negatively associated with three aspects of well-being, namely, life satisfaction, affect balance, and social well-being. The patterns of relationships indicated that to feel estranged from one's culture undermines emotional well-being and social functioning, while it has no significant effect on individuals' personal functioning (i.e., psychological well-being). The correlations, nevertheless, were rather low. Furthermore, results of regression analysis revealed that aspects of cultural estrangement significantly predicted life satisfaction, affect balance, and social well-being over and above gender. Relative to those of the Big Five personality domains and self-esteem (Joshanloo and Afshari 2011), however, the contribution of cultural estrangement was smaller.

But inconsistent with expectations, psychological well-being was not significantly correlated with cultural estrangement. This might be explained in light of the findings of Joshanloo and Ghaedi's (2009) study reported above. They found a positive association between psychological well-being and self-direction (an individualistic value) in Iranian undergraduates. They also reported a negative correlation between this aspect of well-being and tradition, a collectivistic value. These patterns suggest that, in Iranian culture, psychological well-being (as conceptualized by Ryff 1989) is associated with higher levels of idiocentrism (Triandis et al. 1985). Considering such a dimension as autonomy in Ryff's model, this relation between psychological well-being and idiocentrism is not surprising. It can be suggested that for those who place more emphasis on individualistic values, failure at measuring up to the standards of society does not lead to failure at functioning well in one's personal life. On this basis, the absence of association between psychological well-being and cultural estrangement is perhaps understandable in light of the fact that the psychological well-being scale appears to capture individualistic aspects of human functioning in Iranian culture (relative to the social well-being scale, which is positively associated with such collectivistic values as conformity in Iran).

Alternatively, Cozzarelli and Karafa (1998) suggest that it is possible that cultural estrangement satisfies a person's *need for uniqueness* (Snyder and Fromkin 1980) or produces a sense of *optimal distinctiveness* (Brewer 1991). These models posit that there is a need for individuation and uniqueness in individuals. On this basis, it can be suggested that the negative effects of experiencing cultural estrangement on personal functioning might be neutralized by the sense of uniqueness it triggers in the individual. Bernard et al. (2006) provided empirical evidence supporting this idea. They found that participants who perceived a larger gap between personal and societal values expressed a higher need for uniqueness.

Altogether, the findings of this study suggest that the cultural fit model, in its generality, is applicable to Iranian culture (at least for this student sample),

as cultural estrangement correlated inversely with three aspects of well-being. Results of this study also suggest that cultural estrangement has more negative consequences for hedonic aspects of well-being than for eudaimonic well-being. An important point to note is that, in Iranian samples, the significance of personality traits in predicting well-being tends to outweigh that of basic values and cultural estrangement.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I first reviewed the most widely accepted conceptualizations of well-being proposed by western psychologists (i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic well-being). Next, I argued that, consistent with the western conceptualization of well-being, in the implicit view of Islam on mental health, a distinction is made between eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. However, it is important to mention that some aspects of eudaimonic and hedonic well-being endorsed by Islam might be different from that endorsed by western theories. For example, the former emphasizes the satisfaction of the need for worship, but the latter puts more emphasis on the satisfaction of the need for autonomy. One also should bear in mind that although spiritual needs are more emphasized in Islamic contexts, it does not mean that in such cultures a need for autonomy is not recognized. Prior research shows that autonomy is valued in all cultures, but ways in which to satisfy it are different from culture to culture. Ryan and Deci (2008) assert that autonomy, relatedness, and competence are basic psychological needs and therefore "are natural in the sense that they are an invariant, indeed foundational, aspect of the psychological architecture of the human organism, and they are universal in that they apply to all persons regardless of gender, upbringing, or culture" (p. 659) (see also Aik Kwang et al. 2003; Ryan and Deci 2000). They further add that "basic psychological needs may be expressed differently, and the vehicles through which they are satisfied may differ in different societies or stages of life, but their necessity is unchanging" (p. 659). (For empirical support pertaining to the universality of the need for autonomy, see Sheldon et al. 2001). It is also noteworthy that recently, western researchers have started paying more attention to spiritual needs of humankind in their theorizing (e.g., Nelson 2009).

In this chapter, some studies done by Iranian psychologists were reviewed. Although Iranian researchers have conducted survey studies in many areas of psychology, due to space constraints, I chose only three domains to briefly review. The first group of studies I reviewed was those focusing on the validation of western well-being scales in Iranian samples. Although there are some drawbacks in this domain of research, overall, it can be concluded that western scales have evidenced acceptable psychometric characteristics in Iranian samples. Iranian researchers who have validated these scales, or have used them, tend to express their satisfaction with these scales, and their statistical characteristics.

Interestingly enough, although in some other domains (e.g., religiousness) Iranian researchers prefer to develop Iranian scales and have less confidence in

western scales, in the well-being domain, it appears that they have no interest in developing new scales. Western scales are widely used in Iranian studies and tend to produce interpretable and replicable results, which are either in line with western findings or are understandably different from them. Generally, Iranian researchers can come up with some relevant and meaningful ideas (such as pointing to different social and cultural characteristics of Iranian society) to explain the cross-cultural differences they find in their studies compared with western findings.

One important question that rises at this point is whether we can think of the Iranian experience with these western scales as a successful one. Considering the anti-western policy of the Iranian government and appreciable differences between Iranian society and the West in terms of culture, religion, political system, language, economical indicators, etc., some prefer to side with the view that emphasizes making indigenous concepts and scales to be used in other such countries. For instance, Haque (2004a, b) argues that given that western psychology has been secularized and has neglected moral and spiritual phenomena within human beings, its concepts are contrary to Islamic theory of human nature in some critical realms. He concludes the following:

> [C]ontemporary psychology presents a serious challenge to Muslim psychologists. Because of its grounding in the secular worldview, present-day psychology cannot be accepted in its entirety by Muslim psychologists. An effort to understand human behavior will lead Muslim psychologists to adhere to the Islamic perspectives of human nature and this will mean taking them back into the history of their ancestors whose works were based on Islamic framework. Psychologists interested in the Islamic perspective need to work both at the theoretical and practical levels to bring back their own indigenous psychology. (pp. 373–374)

Haque's perspective contains some assumptions that are in contrast with my perspective introduced in this chapter. I argued that, at least in the realm of well-being, the distinction made by western psychologists between eudaimonic and hedonic well-being can be applied to Islamic cultures.

It appears that, generally speaking, Iranian well-being researchers tend to side with the perspective that holds that Iranian and western conceptualizations of well-being are rather similar in terms of central assumptions. They see many anecdotal and theoretical similarities between what western scales assess and the Iranian's lay concept of happiness and positive functioning. As reviewed, empirical findings also tend to lend support to the applicability of these scales in Iranian samples. Moreover, the results of Iranians' studies with these scales are interpretable, whether they are in line with western findings or at discord with them. It does not mean that Iranian researchers have accomplished all they need to. As I noted before, these scales can be improved in many different ways. Also, indigenous scales should be developed, and their functionality should be compared against the functionality of western scales. Future research along these lines may help us more thoroughly address this issue.

Another set of findings that I reviewed concerns the relation between personality traits (the Big Five and self-esteem) and different aspects of well-being. It turns out that these studies' results mostly converge with western ones. Among the Big

Five, E and N are the strongest predictors of hedonic well-being. Additionally, O contributes significantly to eudaimonic well-being and not to hedonic well-being. Self-esteem is a strong predictor of different aspects of well-being in Iran.

That self-esteem is one of the most powerful predictors of well-being in Iran might seem counterintuitive. In fact, some researchers have argued that self-esteem is largely a western phenomenon or concept (e.g., Hewitt 2002). Given that Iran is an Asian country where the emphasis on self-esteem is thought to be lower than that in western countries (Myers and Diener 1995), this relatively strong association calls for explanation. Some aspects of Iranian culture help us better understand the pathways from self-esteem to well-being in this culture. Islam highly esteems humankind. According to Islam, God's spirit has been breathed into human form. Humankind has been created of the best stature (Q 95:4) and is God's vicegerent on earth (Q 2: 30). Elsewhere the Quran says "[v]erily we have honored the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom we created with a marked preferment" (17:70).

The Quran consistently reminds Muslims of their worthy nature in order to prevent them from forgetting or losing it: "[T]he losers will be those who lose themselves …" (Q 39:15). Thus, the intrinsic worth of a Muslim, as a unique human being, is respected by God who is the highest authority. Islam's emphasis on the basic and innate human worth is likely to contribute to the idea that one should always treat oneself as a worthy creature. And those who fail to do so are likely to suffer some disadvantages. On this basis, self-esteem is likely to contribute to Iranians' sense of well-being. Self-esteem plays a central role in Islamic ethics, especially as understood by Iranians. Motahhari (1993) (a Shiite writer) argues that self-esteem is at the very root of Islamic ethics. In other words, reminding individuals of their high value is the main strategy of Islamic ethics in order to persuade them to act righteously. Likewise, drawing on the Quran and Shiite texts, Lashgari (2003) concludes that a lack of self-respect is considered to be the source of all sins and vices in Islam.

If this is the case, one might expect self-esteem to be a strong predictor of well-being in all Muslim cultures. Nevertheless, it appears that non-Islamic elements of a Muslim culture can modify the relation between self-esteem and well-being in that culture. For instance, Suhail and Chaudhry (2004) found no significant relation between self-esteem and well-being in Pakistan, Iran's Muslim neighbor (which is of a Buddhist background emphasizing humility and selflessness). In another Lebanese Muslim sample, however, self-esteem was found to correlate positively with SWB (Ayyash-Abdo and Alamuddin 2007). That this aspect of Islam (i.e., self-worth) is highly emphasized in Iran might be because it is consistent with the pre-Islamic Persian tradition of self-respect and honor and, therefore, is emphasized in mainstream Iranian culture today. For example, in Shahnameh,[3] self-worth, honor, objection to any derogatory treatment by others or any self-derogation are introduced among the basic human values. In sum, in line with

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[3] "The Book of Kings," written around 1000 AD by the Iranian Poet Ferdowsi, which is the national epic of the Persian-speaking world and is held in high esteem by Iranians.

empirical findings, esteeming oneself has been emphasized in Iranian culture as a way to achieve moral and functional well-being.

The third domain of empirical research that I reviewed in this chapter concerns the relation between values and well-being. Although the research in this area is still nascent in Iran, and although more work is needed to examine this relation more thoroughly, preliminary findings of studies conducted in Iran give us the opportunity to compare the findings with those obtained in other countries. One of the main findings in this domain is that there seem to be similar and different sets of healthy and unhealthy values in diverse countries, including Iran. Furthermore, findings suggest that the cultural fit model is applicable, in its generality, to Iranian student samples.

Although psychological research in Iran is in its infancy and Iranian researchers' share of the contribution to the field has been limited so far, in some cases, Iranian studies have provided interesting input into the ongoing debates in well-being studies. I have touched on some of these contributions earlier throughout the chapter, but it is fruitful to highlight three of them here that are related to my area of work.

First, one of the current debates among well-being researchers is whether hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being are conceptually distinct from each other. Kashdan et al. (2008), for example, maintain that this distinction, which is rooted in philosophy, does not translate well to science. Results of Iranian studies, however, suggest that the two aspects seem to be conceptually distinct, as they differentially relate to the Big Five domains, gender, values, etc. For instance, while women are more satisfied with their life than men in Iran (Joshanloo and Afshari 2011), men score higher than women on social well-being Joshanloo et al. (2012). While O has failed to predict life satisfaction, it has significantly predicted some aspects of social well-being Joshanloo et al. (2012) as well as psychological well-being (Joshanloo and Rastegar 2007). (For more arguments in support of the idea that the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being is scientifically and philosophically warranted, see Fave and Bassi 2009; Keyes and Annas 2009; Ryan and Huta 2009).

Next, some Iranian studies highlight the necessity for paying due attention to social aspects of eudaimonic well-being in mental health research. In some studies with Iranian university students, psychological and social well-being scales have shown different patterns of relationship with predictors. For instance, in Joshanloo and Ghaedi's (2009) study, as mentioned earlier, self-direction value was positively correlated with psychological well-being and negatively correlated with social well-being. In addition, power, conformity, and benevolence were not significantly correlated with psychological well-being but were significantly correlated with social well-being. While a significant gender difference was found for social well-being Joshanloo et al. (2012), no significant gender difference was found for two aspects of psychological well-being, namely, purpose in life and personal growth (Joshanloo and Rastegar 2007). These findings attest to the significance of a distinction between social and psychological aspects of eudaimonic well-being and demonstrate the need for more attention to be devoted to the social aspect of well-being, which is generally overlooked in well-being studies.

Finally, as I argued elsewhere (Joshanloo 2010), findings emerged in Iran and some other countries regarding the relation between values and aspects of well-being, calling for more attention to be directed to the important point that the relation between values and well-being varies, depending on the way in which well-being is conceptualized and measured. Therefore, it is important to take into account the distinction between aspects of well-being in formulating the relation between well-being and values, a point which has been generally neglected by researchers heretofore.

In sum, although the work done on well-being in Iran is preliminary, sufficient findings have accumulated to conclude that western scales have helped Iranian psychology to produce a sizeable body of literature on well-being in Iran (compared to other research fields in Iran and in other countries of the region). And in some cases, Iranian studies' results have also contributed to the current debates among well-being psychologists. Thus, I believe that Iranian researchers' attempts with western scales have paid off. Even if Iranian researchers decide to modify western scales or develop indigenous ones, their attempt should be partly based on the existing literature produced by using western scales. I briefly reviewed the existing empirical evidence which supports this assertion in this chapter. Fortunately, appreciably more attention has been given to positive human functioning and well-being constructs in Iran over the past few years, and the size of literature is growing on this topic. We are approaching the point of having enough data to allow us to make firmer conclusions. I am hopeful that this line of research in Iran will be able to make more notable and useful contributions and to provide more insight into mainstream psychology in the years to come.

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