The value in values: Relationships between personal values, and depressed mood and subjective wellbeing

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Research Goal
The goal of this research was to identify possible relationships between values and depressed mood, and values and subjective wellbeing.

The Problem

• Contemporary discourse, usage and endorsement of values is easily detectable in academic domains and applied disciplines. However, the study of values is almost non-existent within psychology, especially in the areas of clinical and positive psychology.
• Leading theorists have asserted that psychology has had much difficulty engaging with values (Davis, 2001; Kasser, 2005; Pahman, 2002), with very little known about what values are or their influence.
• The developing field of positive psychology has shown an interest in values, however the current status regarding values is one of confusion, uncertainty, and ambiguity.

The Research

• Three empirical studies used Schwartz’s model of values (Schwartz, 1992) to investigate relationships between personal values, depressed mood and subjective wellbeing.

Pilot Study

Procedure and Participants
• A 25 minute in-person survey (n = 103).
• Measured depressed mood (BDI-II; Beck et al., 1996) life satisfaction (SwLS; Diener et al., 1985), emotional wellbeing (HM Fordyce, 1988) global subjective happiness (GSH; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), personal values (SVS: Schwartz, 1992, SSVS: Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005, PVQ: Schwartz et al., 2001) and current satisfaction with personal values (CSSSVS: new scale).

Sample of key findings
• The three different ways of measuring personal values (SVS, SSVS, & PVQ) are highly correlated, and all reflect Schwartz’s model in the data.
• Greater current satisfaction with values as a whole was associated with lower depressed mood:
  • Moderate negative correlation between total BDI-II scores and total CESDS scores, r = -.34, p < .01.
  • Statistically significant independent samples t-test between current satisfaction with values and those with depressed mood ($M = 44.14, SD = 8.12$) and those without depressed mood ($M = 53.20, SD = 13.55$), t(497) = 2.423, p = .017, d = .31
• Greater current satisfaction with values as a whole was associated with higher SwLS scores (r = .25, p < .05) and HM scores (r = .33, p < .01)
• The importance of values as a whole was not associated with depressed mood or subjective wellbeing.

Study 1

Procedure and Participants
• A 20 minute online survey (n = 492).
• Measured depressed mood (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) life satisfaction (SwLS), emotional wellbeing (HM), personal values (PVQ) and relational values questions (knowledge of values, living in alignment with values).

Sample of key findings
• The importance of values as a whole not associated with depressed mood, but greater importance associated with greater life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing.
• Greater depressed mood was associated with lesser importance of Stimulation, Self-Direcetion, and Hedonism.
• Greater subjective wellbeing was associated with greater importance of Stimulation, Self-Direcetion, Hedonism, and

Study 2

• This study explored how relational aspects of values (knowledge of values, living in alignment with values) relate to changes in depressed mood and subjective wellbeing over time.

Procedure and Participants
• A 15 minute online survey of participants from Study 1 six months later (n = 173).
• Measured depressed mood (CES-D), life satisfaction (SwLS), emotional wellbeing (HM), personal values (PVQ) and relational values (knowledge of values, living in alignment with values).

Sample of key findings
• The direction of effect model showed that reciprocal relationships were observed between living in alignment with values and knowledge of values, and between living in alignment with values and life satisfaction.
• Greater life satisfaction was predicted by both living in alignment with values and life satisfaction.
• Knowledge of values at time one did not predict either life satisfaction or emotional wellbeing at time two.
• Greater subjective wellbeing at time one was not predicted by either knowledge of values or living in alignment with values at time one.