



The relationship among quiet ego, authenticity, self-compassion and life satisfaction in adults

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Abstract

Life satisfaction and its role in promoting well-being is an important aspect in positive psychology. Dimensions of the self have been found to be related to a satisfying life, so examining self-related domains may be particularly important for understanding life satisfaction outcomes. This study examined the relationship among quiet ego, authenticity, self-compassion, and life satisfaction. The Quiet Ego Scale, the Authenticity Scale, the Self-Compassion Scale- Short Form, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale were administered to 203 adults. The sample had good diversity in terms of age, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and occupation. Findings showed that all three dimensions of self-concept, namely, quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion, were positively correlated with each other. Findings further showed that quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion were positively correlated with life satisfaction. Based on hierarchical regression analyses, quiet ego and authenticity were predictors of life satisfaction but lost their predictive variance in the presence of self-compassion. When sociodemographic factors were controlled, regression analyses showed that marital status had a significant, strong influence on life satisfaction ratings. Interventions that cultivate self-compassion could teach people to become kinder when responding to stressful situations, which improves functioning and promotes life satisfaction. Limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords Quiet ego · Authenticity · Self-compassion · Life satisfaction

Introduction

Positive psychology has gained traction in recent decades in exploring human flourishing and what makes life worth living by focusing on the hopeful aspects of being human such as positive emotions, optimism, self-acceptance, happiness, well-being, and life satisfaction. Studies have shown that higher life satisfaction is associated with lower risk of mortality (Lyyra et al., 2006), better physical health, and lower rates of chronic disease (Siahpush et al., 2008), making this an important topic. It is undeniable that life satisfaction is a monumental aspect in daily life. Dimensions of the self, such as self-concept and self-identity, have been shown to be associated with a satisfying life (Palacios et al., 2015; Taş &

İskender, 2017), so self-related domains may be particularly important in understanding the outcome of life satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is to examine different dimensions of the self, i.e., a quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion, and their relationships with life satisfaction. Quiet ego refers to a self-identity that transcends self-interests by considering the needs and perspective of others, based on a balanced and growth-oriented attitude (Wayment et al., 2014). Concern for the welfare of others and caring for the needs of others are characteristics of an altruistic attitude that promotes life satisfaction (Lu et al., 2019). Therefore, quiet ego that represents a balanced relationship between self and others is considered particularly relevant to maintaining life satisfaction.

Authenticity involves actions that are consistent with one's core values, beliefs, and true feelings and manifests in behaviours that are consistent with one's inner experience (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017). In other words, it refers to how we present our "true" self to the outside world and how congruent we are in relation to our environment. Authenticity is an essential aspect of improving human functioning and is a core component of achieving well-being (Wood et al., 2008). Self-compassion refers to a non-judgmental attitude of awareness,

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kindness and understanding toward one's experiences and shortcomings (Neff, 2003). It is about how we relate to ourselves in terms of understanding and acceptance. Being compassionate towards oneself motivates one to take action to achieve personal growth (Neff, 2003) and contributes to various dimensions of well-being, such as reducing depressive symptoms (Raes, 2010) and lowering perceived stress (Finlay-Jones et al., 2015). Therefore, self-compassion is an essential component in promoting well-being and life satisfaction.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is one of the components of subjective well-being and refers to an overall cognitive judgment by which individuals evaluate their quality of life according to appropriate criteria, taking into account life circumstances and context (Diener et al., 1985; López-Ortega et al., 2016). Individuals compare what they have in their lives and what they want to have, and the resulting positive emotions from this comparison outcome relate to life satisfaction, while negative emotions signal dissatisfaction (Taş & İskender, 2017).

Life satisfaction varies depending on life domains such as health, occupation, financial status, housing, family, and leisure (Taş & İskender, 2017). Apart from these variables, life satisfaction is predicted by domains of the self, such as personality and self-concept. Parker et al. (2019) examined the relative importance of personality and self-concept in predicting life satisfaction and identified extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and self-concept as significant predictors. Other studies identified several self-concept variables related to self-fulfillment, emotion, honesty, and autonomy (Palacios et al., 2015), as well as to an ideal or role congruence (Reich et al., 2013), and their relationships with life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction was assessed using a unidimensional and a multidimensional model. A unidimensional measure of life satisfaction, such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) utilizes a single general dimension based on an individual's cognitive representation of well-being, independent of other domains such as age, sex, education level, social desirability, positive and negative affect. Multidimensional models assess life satisfaction in various domains, one of which is the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction (MSLSS), which covers five specific aspects of family, friends, school, context, and self (Huebner, 1994). The SWLS comprises measurement items that are global and non-specific, allowing respondents to assess quality and satisfaction of life based on their own values, unique criteria, and judgments about what constitutes a good life (Pavot & Diener, 2009). By separating it from an affective domain that carries responses with unconscious motives and is short-term in nature, the SWLS reflects a person's evaluation of life situations in a long-term perspective based on his or her goals and values.

Quiet Ego

The ego, generally referred to as the self, refers to psychological phenomena and processes and encompasses an individual's values and attitudes (APA Dictionary, n.d.). Based on a range of theoretical and methodological approaches, the construct of ego is defined based on five different groups: ego as an evaluation of the self in terms of self-esteem, self-image and self-confidence, ego as an identity in relation to others, ego as consciousness or frame of references that witnesses experience, ego as a moderator for internal impulses, and ego that yields to the id, manifested in self-adulation (Bauer & Wayment, 2008).

The development of the sense of self or ego identity requires an individual, through his or her growing years, to integrate identification from childhood in such a way as to establish a reciprocal relationship with society while maintaining his sense of continuity within (Marcia, 1966). Such development occurs at a stage in life cycle where the individual begins to explore and nurture his professional or ideological commitments. Identity is predominantly developed in adolescence in terms of commitment and exploration through four distinct stages of diffusion (without commitment made), foreclosure (commitment without exploration), moratorium (active identity exploration) and achievement (identity commitment after exploration). Identity, however, does not remain static and fluctuates across different ages and domains in response to changing biological and psychological needs and living conditions (Fadjukoff et al., 2016).

As countries become more economically developed and wealthy, the trend toward egocentricity and individualism becomes more prevalent, leading to an increased sense of self-reliance and detachment (Lamont, 2019). An ego built on self-centeredness and self-absorption tends to contribute to health problems, especially mental disorders. Intense egocentric attention is linked to negative affect, which manifests as depression and anxiety (Mor & Winquist, 2002), eating disorders (Brockmeyer et al., 2015), and social anxiety disorders (Boehme et al., 2015). Self-centeredness, characterized by egocentrism and materialism, is positively correlated with fragile happiness that is based on hedonistic principles, which does not result in authentic, sustainable happiness (Dambrun, 2017).

Rather than clamoring for attention and focusing excessively on the self, an ego subdued by its inflated and superior state strives for a balance between attending to the needs of the self and caring for others, which benefits individual well-being and improved intergroup relations (Mor & Winquist, 2002). A quiet ego, a construct proposed by Bauer and Wayment (2008), refers to an identity that transcends self-interest and egotism, allowing for a balance between the needs and growth of self and others. There are four primary aspects in a quiet ego, characterized by inclusive identity, perspective taking, detached awareness and personal growth (Wayment

et al., 2014). The first two aspects of inclusive identity and perspective taking primarily involve the balance between self and others. Inclusive identity refers to the extent to which an individual identifies with others in terms of personal qualities and includes others psychosocially in one's identity. Perspective-taking involves shifting attention from the self and reflecting on the perspective of others, which facilitates understanding of others' situations, promotes social connection and acceptance, and strengthens compassion based on an inclusive identity (Wayment et al., 2014). Detached awareness and personal growth are two aspects of quiet ego that compensate for each other in terms of focus. Detached awareness refers to a kind of attention that involves mindfulness and a focus on the present moment without preoccupation with expectations and ideals, thus providing a space against defensiveness (Brown et al., 2008). Personal growth involves a longer-term process of individual development and is therefore more focused on the future (Wayment et al., 2014).

Authenticity

An individual with a quiet ego has a strong sense of self, characterized by stable and secure self-worth, self-knowledge, and self-regulation, which is fundamentally linked to authentic functioning (Kernis & Heppner, 2008). A related construct of a quiet ego, authenticity has been presented in a person-centered model based on the theory of Rogers (1961). Based on this theory, authenticity is a three-factorial construct that includes levels of consistency between (a) an individual's main experience, (b) conscious awareness of said experience, and (c) outward communication and behaviour (Wood et al., 2008). The first aspect involves an individual's actual physiological states or emotions and deep-level cognitions, compared or contrasted against the second aspect that represents awareness of such states. The experience of the extent to which one experiences self-alienation between said actual experience and conscious awareness constitutes the first aspect of authenticity.

An individual's experience between conscious awareness and behaviour or emotional expressions reflects the congruence that underlies the second dimension of authenticity. Behavioural and emotional expressions that are consistent with conscious awareness of physiological states, emotions or cognitions indicate that one is true to oneself, in accordance with one's beliefs and values that characterize an authentic life (Wood et al., 2008). Another aspect of authenticity comprises the particular degree to which an individual accepts the influence of others and the belief that he or she must conform to the expectations of others. Social environment fosters the internalization of others' views and exerts external influence, which plays an important role in affecting authentic living and self-alienation.

Apart from a tripartite model, authenticity is also conceptualized as comprising four distinct but interrelated components: awareness, unbiased process, behaviour, and relational orientation (Goldman & Kernis, 2002). Awareness involves having knowledge about oneself, such as preferences, dislikes, strengths and weakness. Unbiased process refers to looking objectively at information about oneself and accepting both positive and negative aspects. Behaviour reflects a person's values and respects the individual's needs and preferences, guided by intention and conscious choice. Relational orientation refers to the ability to be oneself around others and develop relationships that allow for genuine expression of core aspects of oneself (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Wood et al. (2008) believed conceptualization of authenticity in a tripartite manner to be more inclusive based on stability between one's actual experience, mental representation of said experience and one's communication and external behavior. In terms of validity and factorial structure of authenticity measures, authenticity inventory based on the multicomponent model (Goldman & Kernis, 2002) was not empirically supported in terms of factor structures, while the Authenticity Scale of tripartite structure (Wood et al., 2008) was confirmed (White, 2011), making the Authenticity Scale a preferred instrument.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion involves love and acceptance for oneself without blame despite experiencing unfortunate circumstances (Anggraeni & Kurniawan, 2012; Neff, 2003). According to Neff (2011), self-compassion comprises three major components of (i) self-kindness versus self-judgment, (ii) common humanity versus isolated feelings, and (iii) mindfulness versus over-identification. Self-kindness refers to extending understanding and caring to oneself rather than judging and being critical of imperfections and inadequacies, and treating oneself with a supportive and encouraging tone and demeanor. The second component of self-compassion involves a sense of common humanity, where one sees and acknowledges commonalities in human conditions such as weaknesses and imperfections (Neff, 2011). Difficult circumstances are viewed in a larger and inclusive perspective so that one does not feel isolated from others when experiencing suffering in light of shared human experiences. Mindfulness is the third component, which refers to being aware and observing the present moment without suppressing or regurgitating negative thoughts or feelings. Mindfulness helps one to view what is experiencing clearly and objectively while preventing over-identification, i.e., getting carried away with one's painful thoughts or feelings (Neff, 2011).

In promoting mentally healthy development, the emphasis is on nurturing self-esteem in childhood and adolescence. However, too much self-esteem encourages sense of

superiority, which creates comparative interpersonal dynamics that exacerbate relational distance and undermine connectedness (Neff, 2009). Self-compassion offers an alternative approach to positive self-care, one that involves kindness, free from judgment or social comparison (Neff, 2009). Self-compassion can be said to be related to the notion of a quiet ego that is neither self-prioritizing nor subordinate to others. Individuals who are self-compassionate have been found to be better able to balance the needs of self and others in resolving conflict (Yarnell & Neff, 2012). In this regard, higher levels of self-compassion are associated with higher prospects of reaching compromise decisions, greater authenticity, lower emotional distress, and higher levels of relational well-being.

Relationships between Quiet Ego, Authenticity, Self-Compassion, and Life Satisfaction

Studies have shown that quiet ego contributes to psychological well-being by maintaining a balance between a strong sense of agency and concern for the well-being of others, which translates into increased levels of self-esteem, resilience, life satisfaction, and flexible and open-minded thinking (Wayment & Bauer, 2017; Wayment et al., 2014). Quiet ego fosters life satisfaction through the development of an ecological identity. This identity extends kindness beyond the self and aligns with environmental ecosystems, promoting harmony and well-being (Wayment et al., 2014). One of the constructs overlapping with quiet ego is a spiritual sense of self-transcendence. Spirituality involves the experience of being connected to something greater, of seeing oneself as part of a larger whole. This can be viewed through the growth dimension of quiet ego, which has been found to predict satisfaction with life (Marques et al., 2013). A person with quiet ego is one who is less defensive, who approaches and interprets a situation in a more holistic way, considering different perspectives without worrying too much about their own point of view. Such an attitude increases life satisfaction as defensiveness plays a role in regulating life satisfaction (Christopher et al., 2007).

Authenticity bears an influence on a person's life satisfaction. A person with greater authenticity experiences higher self-esteem and fewer negative emotional experiences, which contributes to higher life satisfaction, and in turn supports healthy psychological functioning and subjective well-being (Goldman & Kernis, 2002). Individuals who lack authenticity exhibit forced or unnatural behaviours, leading to anxiety and psychopathological problems. Therefore, those who have a clearer and concise sense of self are able to remain true to their emotions, beliefs, and values, and thus show more positive signs of well-being (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017). Congruence, a crucial element of authenticity, represents a significant determinant of life satisfaction (Reich et al., 2013). A high level of congruence between one's primary experience, awareness,

and external behaviour or communication reduces stress, disorientation, and dissatisfaction, manifested by those who go against their own beliefs or values. Higher life satisfaction is also achieved by those who experience feelings of authenticity given by the possession of power (Kifer et al., 2013). Possession of power allows for authentic self-fulfillment, which contributes to higher life satisfaction by increasing the connection between one's inner states and one's behaviour.

Self-compassion has been associated with psychological functioning in terms of positive emotions, optimism and better well-being (Zessin et al., 2015). An individual with self-compassion has a non-judgmental attitude towards one's shortcomings and failures, creating an effective buffer against stressful experiences, leading to less stress, anxiety, and depression (Dreisoerner et al., 2021). Self-compassion plays an important role in fostering life satisfaction through its essential components. Self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness are positively correlated with life satisfaction and subjective happiness; common humanity and mindfulness have been found to predict life satisfaction (Mülazım & Eldeleklioğlu, 2016). Being kind to oneself entails having less self-criticism, which would reduce negative emotions and thoughts. An orientation to common humanity leads individuals to feel less isolated, less lonely, and more connected to the world around them in light of the shared human experience. A person who is mindful is aware of negative thoughts and emotions and therefore does not over-identify with them or get carried away by them.

Based on the literature cited, it is hypothesized that quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion are positively related to life satisfaction. It is hypothesized that these three variables have relative predictive power for life satisfaction. An individual with high quiet ego, high authenticity, and high self-compassion would experience more satisfaction in life.

Method

Participants

A total of 203 participants were recruited from public transport on mainline rail services in Singapore due to their accessibility to a larger pool and a wider age range of those available for surveying. Overall, the sample had good diversity in terms of age, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and occupation. Our sample consisted of 128 women and 75 men aged between 20 and 70 years ($M = 36.84$, $SD = 7.78$). The marital status of the sample was 53% married, 42% single, 1% engaged, and 4% divorced or separated. The self-reported nationality of the participants was as follows: 42% Malaysia, 37% Singapore, 7% Europe/ United States, 6% China, 2% India, 2% Myanmar, and 4% other. The ethnic distribution of the sample was 81% Chinese, 7% Caucasian, and 3%

Malay, 4% Indian, and 5% other. The religion of the participants was Buddhist (34%), Christian (21%), Taoist (2%), Muslim (4%), Hindu (2%) and Atheist (37%). In terms of occupation, 13% of the participants worked in the IT sector, 12% in banking or finance, 62% had a position in various service sectors, 4% were self-employed, 5% were students, and 4% were unemployed.

Measures

Quiet Ego Scale (QES; Wayment et al., 2014) The QES measures perceptions of quiet ego in relation to four dimensions, a) detached awareness, b) inclusive identity, c) perspective taking, and d) personal growth. The scale comprises 14 items (e.g., “I find myself doing things without paying much attention”) rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. All items were summed to obtain an overall QES score. The higher the score, the more quiet ego participants tended to perceive. Cronbach’s alpha was reported as .76 in a previous study (see Wayment et al., 2014). In the current sample, Cronbach’s alpha was .78.

Authenticity Scale (AS; Wood et al., 2008) The AS is a three-factorial conceptualization of authenticity that includes the subscales of a) authentic living, b) acceptance of external influences, and c) self-alienation. The scale comprises 12 items (e.g., “I think it is better to be yourself than to be popular.”), with each subscale comprising 4 items. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *does not describe me at all* to 5 = *describes me very well*. Cronbach’s alpha for the subscales was reported to range from .70 to .84 (Wood et al., 2008). For the current sample, Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .78 to .85. To obtain the total score for AS, scores for accepting external influences and self-alienation were reverse-coded before adding to authentic living (White, 2011). Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample was .74.

Self-Compassion Scale- Short Form (SCS-SF; Raes et al., 2011) The SCS-SF measures self-compassion using six dimensions, a) self-kindness, b) self-judgment, c) common humanity, d) isolation, e) mindfulness, and f) over-identification. The scale comprises 12 items (e.g., “I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like.”) rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*. To obtain a total score, the negative subscale items for self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification were reverse-scored, and an overall mean score was computed for all items. Cronbach’s alpha was reported as .86 in a previous study (Raes et al., 2011). For the current sample, Cronbach’s alpha was .79.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) The SWLS measures the life satisfaction component of subjective

well-being, consisting of 5 items (e.g., “The conditions of my life are excellent.”) rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. All items were summed to obtain an overall SWLS score. Cronbach’s alpha was reported as .87 in a previous study (Diener et al., 1985). For the current sample, Cronbach’s alpha was .87.

Procedure

This study was conducted based on the ethical principles outlined by British Psychological Society (BPS) and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee. With respect to individual autonomy, privacy, and dignity, participants who chose to participate were informed of the nature and purpose of the study. All participants were at least 18 years of age and capable of giving independent informed consent. Participants were provided with an information sheet that included information about the research aim, the type of data collected, the method of data collection, the time involved, the conditions of confidentiality and anonymity, compliance with the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act, and the risks associated with participation. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences and of the option to have their data destroyed by a specified date if they wished. After obtaining consent, participants were presented with a self-report questionnaire that included quiet ego, authenticity, self-compassion, and life satisfaction. A debriefing form was attached at the end of the questionnaire to provide participants with the researcher’s contact information to address any concerns related to the study.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26. Descriptive statistics were calculated using mean and standard deviation. Normality of the data was assessed with skewness and kurtosis values. The instruments used in the survey were tested for internal reliability by calculating Cronbach’s alpha values. Correlations between the variables of interest were also calculated using Pearson correlation analysis. Finally, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if there was a change in variance, denoted as R^2 , between models when additional predictors were introduced. We performed four separate regression analyses to analyze the relative contribution of the predictors on individual life satisfaction. Sociodemographic controls were first entered into the regression equation. All sociodemographic variables were transformed by dummy coding prior to hierarchical analysis (i.e., gender (female = 1, male = 0), marital status (married = 1, non-married = 0), nationality (Singaporean = 1, non-Singaporean = 0), ethnicity

(Chinese = 1, non-Chinese = 0), religion (Buddhist = 1, non-Buddhist = 0), and occupation (various service sectors = 1, non-service sector = 0). Quiet ego was entered in the second step, total authenticity in the third step, and finally self-compassion in the fourth step. The order was determined based on the presumed temporal sequence of occurrence of the events. Life satisfaction was treated as the dependent variable.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means and standard deviations for all main variables are described in Table 1. Skewness for these scales ranged from -0.56 to 0.44 ; kurtosis ranged from -0.40 to 0.71 , therefore the data obtained were considered normally distributed.

Intercorrelations between Study Variables

The intercorrelations between quiet ego, authenticity variables, self-compassion, and life satisfaction are shown in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, 20 of 21 correlations were statistically significant ($p < .01$ (2-tailed)), except for the relationship between accepting external influences and life satisfaction. In general, weak to moderate correlations were found between the variables, forming the basis for the hierarchical multiple regression analysis that follows.

Hierarchical Regression Analyses

To maintain statistical rigour, the assumptions of the regression analyses were tested. First, scatterplots showed that the relationship between the predictors and the criterion variable was linear (Jeong & Jung, 2016). Because some predictors were correlated (see Table 2 for details), an analysis of variance inflation factor (VIF) was computed to assess collinearity. The highest observed value of VIF observed was 1.467, indicating a negligible collinearity problem in our dataset (Jeong & Jung, 2016). Durbin-Watson was also conducted

to determine whether the values of the residuals were independent. The statistical value was 2.091, indicating that this assumption is also satisfied (Jeong & Jung, 2016). Our final assumption regarding influential cases or outliers was tested using Cook's Distance values. The values obtained were all under 1, indicating that there are no extreme outliers in our dataset (Cook, 1979).

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis with life satisfaction as the dependent variable are shown in Table 3. The first model showed that only marital status ($\beta = .292$; $p < .01$) significantly predicted the variance of life satisfaction with a value of 10.3% ($F(7, 193) = 3.157$, $p < .01$). In addition to marital status, the second model showed a significant effect of quiet ego on life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.193$, $p < .01$). Quiet ego significantly predicted reports of life satisfaction and accounted for 3.7% of the variance ($F(8, 192) = 3.650$, $p < .01$). However, when total authenticity was added to the equation, marital status remained significant, but quiet ego did not maintain its significant relationship with life satisfaction. The finding nevertheless suggests that Total Authenticity was a significant predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.219$, $p < .01$). Adding Total Authenticity to the regression equation showed that authenticity cumulatively contributed significantly to the predictability of life satisfaction, explaining an additional 3.6% of the variance ($F(9, 191) = 3.682$, $p < .001$). Finally, self-compassion contributed an additional 13.6% of the variance in life satisfaction ($F(10, 190) = 6.799$, $p < .001$). Standardized regression coefficients indicated that self-compassion was significantly related to life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.403$, $p < .001$). Neither quiet ego nor total authenticity had a significant direct effect on individual life satisfaction. Unexpectedly, marital status also retained significance in this model.

Discussion

In the present study, the intercorrelations between quiet ego, authenticity, self-compassion, and life satisfaction were examined. Findings showed that all three dimensions of self-concept, namely, quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion,

Table 1 Means and standard deviations for main variables

| Variables | Mean | Standard deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Quiet Ego | 48.94 | 6.650 | -0.024 | -0.237 |
| Authentic living subscale | 16.56 | 2.353 | -0.496 | 0.051 |
| Accepting external influence subscale | 11.27 | 3.506 | -0.020 | -0.402 |
| Self-alienation subscale | 9.35 | 3.478 | 0.440 | -0.227 |
| Total Authenticity | 43.74 | 7.267 | -0.143 | -0.318 |
| Self-compassion | 38.16 | 6.567 | 0.026 | -0.135 |
| Life satisfaction | 23.98 | 5.616 | -0.560 | 0.712 |

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations of the variables

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------------------------------------------|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Quiet Ego | | .368** | -.283** | -.495** | .498** | .278** | .193** |
| 2. Authentic living subscale | | | -.380** | -.441** | .713** | .303** | .204** |
| 3. Accepting external influence subscale | | | | .397** | -.789* | -.251** | -.073 |
| 4. Self-alienation subscale | | | | | -.804** | -.392** | -.334** |
| 5. Total Authenticity | | | | | | .393** | .261** |
| 6. Self-compassion | | | | | | | .446** |
| 7. Life satisfaction | | | | | | | |

** $p < .01$

were positively correlated with each other. Findings were consistent with that of Wayment et al. (2014), who found a moderate to strong relationship between QES and these variables. Authenticity is found in a state of reduced ego involvement, less defensiveness with the ability to detach a constructed self from aggressive and self-focused tendencies (Maurer, 2018). These states reflect the main characteristics identified in a quiet ego that strives for a balance of concern for self and others. Because a quieter ego seeks to achieve an optimal balance of positive and negative appraisals toward the self (Wayment et al., 2014), it is reasonable to find that it is negatively associated with accepting external influence and self-alienation, as these constructs reflect an ego with a tilted negative self-appraisal. The correlational finding between quiet ego and self-compassion has already been supported in several studies, as quiet ego is known to be a measure of self-identity that embodies compassion (Wayment et al., 2014; Wayment et al., 2016).

Quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion were positively associated with life satisfaction. Wayment et al. (2016) illustrated that individuals with a quieter ego were more likely to set compassion-oriented goals, have better self-control, and more self-compassion, leading to less perceived stress and better life satisfaction. It is claimed that individuals who report higher levels of authenticity experience greater life satisfaction and psychological well-being by exhibiting more emotional expressions (Rathi & Lee, 2021). An authentic individual is more likely to acknowledge and express their inner states, which fulfills the needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence that subsequently contribute to well-being (Sutton, 2020). Individuals who practice more self-compassion are more likely to experience satisfaction with their lives (Neff & Seppälä, 2017). Life satisfaction increases when components of self-compassion such as self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness are practiced more frequently, while elements of self-judgment and isolation are negatively correlated with life satisfaction (Mülazım & Eldeleklioglu, 2016).

Table 3 Hierarchical regression analysis for life satisfaction

| Predictor | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | b | Beta | b | Beta | b | Beta | b | Beta |
| Age | -.062 | -.085 | -.072 | -.100 | -.083 | -.114 | -.081 | -.112 |
| Gender | -1.048 | -.090 | -.701 | -.060 | -.531 | -.046 | -.580 | -.050 |
| Marital status | 3.294 | .292*** | 3.399 | .301*** | 3.413 | .303*** | 2.679 | .238*** |
| Nationality | -1.470 | -.126 | -1.120 | -.096 | -1.194 | -.103 | -.329 | -.028 |
| Ethnicity | .232 | .015 | .504 | .034 | .506 | .034 | -.137 | -.009 |
| Religion | .230 | .019 | .272 | .023 | .344 | .029 | .607 | .051 |
| Occupation | 1.047 | .083 | .793 | .063 | .678 | .054 | .311 | .026 |
| Quiet ego | | | .163 | .193** | .071 | .084 | .034 | .040 |
| Total Authenticity | | | | | .169 | .219** | .064 | .083 |
| Self-Compassion | | | | | | | 3.729 | .403*** |
| Constant | 25.918 | | 18.052 | | 25.775 | | 14.638 | |
| R ² | .103 | | .140 | | .176 | | .312 | |
| R ² Change | – | | .037 | | .036 | | .136 | |

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

When quiet ego was first entered into the regression equation, it was a predictor of life satisfaction. This finding is supported by Wayment et al. (2014) who showed that quiet ego provided predictive variance for life satisfaction, albeit to a lesser extent compared to other aspects such as psychological resilience. Quiet ego lost its significance when authenticity and self-compassion were added to the model. Wayment et al. (2014) examined whether quiet ego could explain additional variance to subjective well-being after controlling for the constructs of authenticity, self-compassion, and mindfulness, and found that quiet ego provided little to no significant variance for life satisfaction in this context, suggesting an indirect relationship between quiet ego and life satisfaction related to an individual's skills, abilities, and attitudes. Several studies have demonstrated the role of authenticity in predicting well-being (Sutton, 2020; Wood et al., 2008). White (2011) illustrated that authenticity better predicted well-being by explaining significant variance in life satisfaction that exceeded the variance of another individual variable (i.e., self-discrepancy). Boyraz et al. (2014) further argued that authenticity is a strong predictor of life satisfaction, underscoring the role of congruence within the self in enhancing well-being.

Self-compassion was found to provide significant predictive variance for life satisfaction after controlling for quiet ego and authenticity. This finding is consistent with Neff (2011) that self-compassion predicts well-being when controlling for other variables such as neuroticism. A study by Yang et al. (2016) illustrated the underlying mechanism between self-compassion and life satisfaction with hope as a mediator. A hopeful mindset enables individuals to identify desired goals in life and leads to increased confidence and motivation, and in turn promotes life satisfaction (Gilman et al., 2006; Marques et al., 2013). Furthermore, the regression analysis showed that marital status has a significant, strong influence on life satisfaction scores. Perhaps we are not far from the research trend; a recent study analyzed data from 286,059 individuals between October 2017 and September 2018 reported that marital status appeared as the second strongest predictor of life satisfaction (Vassilev & Manclossi, 2019). In addition, Stutzer and Frey (2006) found that people who are married or in a civil partnership experience less social stigma and have more financial resources than people with other material status. Marriage provides more connection and bonding, and that makes life worth living. Not surprisingly, marriage has a greater impact on reported life satisfaction than any of the other sociodemographic characteristics considered in this research.

Practical, Social, and Clinical Implications

In terms of implication, the current study is considered to be the first study to incorporate the self-related variables of quiet

ego, authenticity, and self-compassion in determining an individual's life satisfaction. The variables of quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion reflect the relationship between an individual's inner self and the external world. Therefore, the findings obtained give an indication of the influence of such a relationship on a person's life satisfaction. The social implication of these self-constructs can perhaps be considered under the framework of symbolic interactionism, which is based on the premise that society shapes the self and the self reflects society (Delgado, 2009). Therefore, given the reciprocal nature of self and society, cultivating an identity that embrace quiet ego and self-compassion would promote a more inclusive and kindness-based culture that discourages extreme behaviours from certain perspective-taking. Encouraging authenticity in individuals would shape a more creative and diverse society where individuals contribute their truest potentials to foster a robust and dynamic culture. From a clinical perspective, the inclusion of these domains as part of identity formation would promote a better developmental outcome, especially for adolescents in terms of building a positive identity. A positive identity promotes self-esteem, foster exploration and engagement, and reduces discrepancies between the real self, the ideal self, the self-perceived by self or others, or between the personal self and the social self (Tsang et al., 2012).

This study also revealed an interesting phenomenon in which the variables of quiet ego and authenticity lose significance for life satisfaction in the presence of self-compassion. Such findings contribute to the theory and knowledge gap in the field of positive psychology. The current findings should contribute to effective applications that foster life satisfaction. Promoting quiet ego as a skill-based intervention encourages people to be more inclusive in their attitudes and to adopt different perspectives that promote growth-oriented lifestyles. Positive interventions could support people to appreciate and accept their own uniqueness and the otherness of other, helping them to access and express their authentic selves. Interventions that cultivate self-compassion could teach people to become kinder when responding to distress and stressful situations, which improves functioning and promotes life satisfaction.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Nevertheless, there are some limitations in the current study. Due to the convenience sampling method, the results are limited in terms of generalization to the population. The current study used a cross-sectional analysis, which does not help to examine these variables over a longer period of time, or determine the cause and effect involving these variables. The current regression analysis did not identify mediating and moderating variables that affect life satisfaction. Another limitation of the current study is the method used. The

questionnaires were completed in the form of self-report; thus participants might provide responses that are consistent with socially acceptable values, leading to social desirability bias that distorts the relationships between variables (Van de Mortel, 2008). The current study is also limited in that the variables examined are based on dimensions of self that contribute low to moderate variance in capturing life satisfaction. Other dimensions of self-concept were not included in this study. For example, self-esteem, as an expression of perception and evaluation towards oneself, is positively associated with life satisfaction (Patel et al., 2018). Other aspects such as physical health and fitness also exert important influences on the level of life satisfaction (Marques et al., 2017).

There are several suggestions for future research directions. The sampling method can be improved by using probability sampling for sufficient representation of the different groups. The study can further investigate mediators and moderators to provide more information to explain the relationship between self-related variables and life satisfaction. Mediators and moderators increase the amount of research information (MacKinnon, 2011). Mediators provide information about the process (i.e., how and why) by which variables of quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion relate to life satisfaction, whereas moderators explain variables that influence the relationship between quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion with life satisfaction. Positive psychology constructs, especially those related to the self such as hope and gratitude, can be explored for their mediating and moderating role in life satisfaction (Roberts et al., 2015; Tsang et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2016). Participants' demographic information, in particular ethnicity and religion, can be examined to reflect cultural context that may influence self-compassion values (Neff et al., 2008), which in turn contributes to predictive variance in life satisfaction. As a measure to control for survey response bias, it is suggested that a lie scale be implemented to maintain participant response consistency and reduce the prevalence of falsification.

Conclusion

It is undisputed that life satisfaction is an indispensable element of human well-being. The findings of this study suggest that the traits of quiet ego, authenticity, and self-compassion play an essential role in life satisfaction. Therefore, activities and interventions that promote these traits represent a strengths-based approach that could have a positive effect on increasing life satisfaction. The results of the current study suggest that strengthening these traits may be beneficial in promoting awareness and understanding of the importance of balancing self and others, maintaining one's uniqueness, and offering a kind and non-judgmental attitude toward oneself in order to achieve a satisfying life.

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Data Availability The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Code Availability Not applicable.

Declarations

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Consent to Participate Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants recruited in the study.

Consent for Publication All authors read the final version of the paper and give full consent for this paper to be published.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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