

The subjective quality of choice in real life situations of different scale and its personality correlates

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The basis of our research is a thesis that choice is an inner self-orientation activity that is beyond cognitive evaluation of alternatives and that has reduced or, on the contrary, more complex forms depending on importance of choice situation and individual features of a person. The object of our study is the subjective quality of choice – a person's attitude to the choice he makes irrespective of its result.

We have hypothesized that the quality of choice process as reflected through subjective evaluations might differ depending on some personality variables and predict the satisfaction with choice and other outcome variables. We also supposed that the choice structure isn't the same in real choice situations of different subjective importance (or scale); therefore, making good decisions in the significant and, on the other hand, valueless life situations is predicted by different personality variables.

Our assumptions have been proven in a study with undergraduate psychology students (N=74) who were asked to reveal two choice situations of different scale (so called 'fateful' and 'everyday' choices) from their experience, to evaluate these situations by a number of scales, and to fill a number of well-being scales and personality inventories. As a measure of a person's attitude to both choice situations, we used a special questionnaire – the Subjective quality of choice (SQC) technique (Leontiev, Mandrikova, Fam, 2007) that allows to fix the following qualitative dimensions of choice: mindfulness of choice, emotional sign, self-determination and satisfaction with choice actually made. The test also has the general score of choice quality.

As we hypothesized, all parameters of the SQC technique revealed systematic significant ($p < .05$) correlations with personality variables, and, in turn, predicted the emotional outcomes. In particular, in both cases mindfulness of choice significantly positively correlated with achievement orientation (.349 for 'fateful' choice and .324 for 'everyday' choice), orientation to novelty (.244; .274) and having purpose in life (.272; .291); positive emotion regarding the choice significantly correlated with inner locus of control (.236; .348), and self-determination significantly positively correlated with orientation to novelty (.274; .399). So, these variables can be called universal personality predictors of good choice capacity.

Also we found out some specific predictors of successful 'fateful' choice (inclination to risk) and successful 'everyday' choice (autonomy, rationality, meaningful process and result of life). The quantitative data analysis indicates the essential phenomenological differences between choice situations of these two types by the following parameters: content of choice and general context of the situation, emotional attitude to the choice process and satisfaction with its result, mindfulness, self-determination and subjective difficulty of choice.

The data obtained in the study so far confirm our hypothesis about the differences in phenomenology and personality predictors of choices of different scale.

Key words: choice, personality variables, quality of choice, phenomenology of choice.