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**RELATIONSHIP OF WORLD ASSUMPTIONS WITH  
DISPOSITIONAL PERSONALITY TRAITS AND LIFE  
SATISFACTION**

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*Abstract*

The paper examines the relationship of world assumptions with dispositional personality traits and life satisfaction. World Assumption Scale, HEXACO-PI-R and Satisfaction with Life Scale were used for the diagnostics. The sample of 505 respondents (63.7% of women, 36.3% of men; aged from 18 to 78 years,  $M = 26.78$ ,  $SD = 11.76$ ), demonstrates the age and gender differences according to world assumptions of an individual. With age, people begin to evaluate themselves as more well-deserved and successful, and others as kinder and more cooperative. Women demonstrate a more positive self-image, compared to men, and consider the world fairer. Among the six factors emphasized in the HEXACO model, Extroversion is most closely associated with all five subscales of the World Assumption Scale. High Conscientiousness implies belief in a just world, appreciation of oneself as a good person capable of acting successfully in difficult situations. People with high Agreeableness consider the world to be benevolent and fair, and the destiny to be favorable to them. Honesty correlates with belief in a just world and success, while Openness to experience correlates with a positive self-image. Emotionality is not connected with world assumptions of an individual. Satisfaction with life correlates with all world assumptions of the individual ( $R$  ranging from 0.16 to 0.33,  $p < 0.001$ ). The world assumptions account for 17.6% of the variance of life satisfaction. The self-image and faith in a just world are significant predictors of life satisfaction.

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**Keywords:** World assumptions, dispositional personality traits, life satisfaction.



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## 1. Introduction

The concept of “world assumptions” describes the global sustainable ideas of a human about the world and about himself. This concept is developed in different fields of psychological science, namely in social, cognitive, clinical psychology and psychotherapy. World assumptions can be considered as social attitudes characterizing the interaction of a person with the world in “ordinary” life, affecting his perception of current developments, emotional response, and behavior. The world assumptions are highlighted by the American scientist Janoff-Bulman (1989) in the form this article considers them, within the framework of the theory of psychological trauma, as factors determining the success of psychological adaptation to stressful events. Based on his implicit ideas about the structure of the world, a person interprets events in his life and forms his attitude to them. If a person considers the world as fairly fair and prosperous and sees himself as a worthy person capable to cope with difficulties, his level of psychological adaptation is high, otherwise he would hardly cope with post-traumatic experiences.

## 2. Problem Statement

The world assumptions represent the most important factor in overcoming post-traumatic experiences, as evidenced by a number of studies (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Ehlers & Clark, 2000). In Russian psychology, world assumptions are also a subject of interest (Padun & Tarabrina, 2004). In a number of works, the analysis focuses on the interrelations of various world assumptions with other psychological constructs, in particular, with subjective well-being (Shamionov, 2016, Weber, Ruch, Littman-Ovadia, Lavy, & Gai, 2013), as well as with personality traits and BigFive factors (Nudelman, 2013; Uryvaev & Tarasova, 2011). Thus, belief in a just world is positively correlated with both cognitive and emotional aspects of subjective psychological well-being (Dalbert, Lipkus, Sallay, & Goch, 2001; Correia, Batista, & Lima, 2009; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2006). Analysis of the relationship of this attitude with dispositional personality traits indicates a unidirectional relationship with Extraversion and a multidirectional relationship with Neuroticism and Openness to new experience (Nudelman, 2013). The world scheme of the competitive world is typical for people with low Agreeableness, and it is considered dangerous by people with low Openness to experience and high Consciousness (Sibley & Duckitt, 2009).

Along with social worldviews, self-perceptions are also considered as world assumptions. Thus, high Self-esteem as an expression of the Self-image is observed in emotionally stable, extrovert, conscious people with moderate agreeableness and openness to new experiences (Robins, Tracy, Trzesniewski, Potter, & Gosling, 2001). Self-esteem is not only directly related to life satisfaction (Bajaj, Gupta, & Pande, 2016; Błachnio, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2016), but also mediates the influence of other characteristics on it (Du, Bernardo, & Yeung, 2015; Joshanloo & Afshari, 2011).

## 3. Research Questions

It should be noted that the concept of world assumptions is not explicitly defined, and their list varies in different authors. The assumption “Belief in a just world” is the most developed to date, and other world assumptions are not sufficiently studied. It is not quite clear how they are related to other personal

characteristics, what place they occupy in the personality structure, not only in the situation of post-traumatic experience, but also in everyday life.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

This work aimed to analyze the relationship of the world assumptions of an individual with the most generalized personality traits, as well as an assessment of the contribution of the world assumptions of an individual to the subjective satisfaction with life.

#### **5. Research Methods**

##### **5.1. Subjects**

The sample includes 505 respondents (63.7% women, 36.3% men; aged from 18 to 78 years,  $M = 26.78$ ,  $SD = 11.76$ ).

##### **5.2. Methods**

The world assumptions of an individual were diagnosed using the questionnaire “World assumption scale of an individual” which is adapted and somewhat modified for the Russian sample by the WAS (World Assumption Scale) method (Padun & Kotelkikova, 2008). The scale has five subscales which enable to evaluate attitudes towards the surrounding world - “*benevolence of the surrounding world*”, “*justice*” and “*control*” and also “*self-image*” and “*fortune*” related to oneself in this world. *Benevolence of the surrounding world* suggests that people are trustworthy, friendly, and supportive. *Justice* of the world reflects the attitude that everyone gets what they deserve; and good people find happiness and success. *Control* over life situations implies believing in the possibility to choose the most advantageous strategy of behavior in difficult life situations. The *self-image* shows the person’s opinion about himself, an assessment of his attractiveness to other people, and *fortune* indicates the favor of fate and luck.

Dispositional personality traits were diagnosed by the HEXACO-PI-R questionnaire (HEXACO Personality Inventory - Revised) adapted for the Russian sample (Egorova & Parshikova, 2015). The questionnaire is designed to diagnose six most generalized personality traits (Honesty/Modesty, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience). More specific personal characteristics (25 facets constituting these features) are not presented in this part of the work.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was used to diagnose satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The questionnaire of Diener comprises 5 statements aimed at assessment by the subject of the quality of his life in general in relation to a specific ideal.

##### **5.3. Results processing**

When filling out all the questionnaires, the subjects evaluated their agreement with the statements presented in the questionnaires on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 point corresponded to the answer “I completely disagree” and 5 points corresponded to “I fully agree”. The total score obtained on each scale was divided by the number of points that make up the scale. Thus, all the scales have the same dimension (from 1 to 5 points), which simplifies their comparison.

## 5.4. Data analysis methods

Spearman's rank correlation coefficients and multiple regression were used to assess the relationship of variables. Differences between groups were assessed by comparing the means (by Student's t-test), variances (by F-ratio), effect rate (Kohen's d), and by conducting multiple comparisons (ANOVA). Data processing was performed in the IBM SPSS Statistical system, version 18.0.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Descriptive statistics of indicators of world assumptions of an individual

Answers of the respondents on four of the five scales cover the whole range of possible values – from 1 to 5. On the “control assumption” scale, the minimum value obtained on the sample is slightly higher, namely 1.86. For the scales of “benevolence of the surrounding world” and “justice”, the average values are 3.1, and the standard deviation is 0.79 and 0.74, respectively. On the three scales of “self-image” (M = 3.54, SD = 0.77), “fortune” (M = 3.54, SD = 0.74) and “control assumption” (M = 3.47, SD = 0.64), average values are slightly shifted to the right side, to the area of higher values, suggesting that a person is worthy, successful and able to control events occurring in life.

### 6.2. Age-related changes of indicators of world assumptions of an individual

Correlation analysis indicates a positive relationship between age and ideas about the benevolence of the surrounding world ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), the “self-image” ( $r = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and “fortune” ( $r = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). With age, people begin to consider others as more trustworthy, kind and supportive, and themselves as good people whose merits outweigh the deficiencies, and they believe that fate was favorable to them.

Figure 1 presents the results obtained for the five indicators of the world assumptions of an individual in six age groups (18–20, 21–30, 31–40, 41–50, 51–60, 61–78 years). The diagram shown in the figure demonstrates non-linear age-related changes in the world assumptions of an individual. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicates the presence of significant differences between the age groups ( $F = 5.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

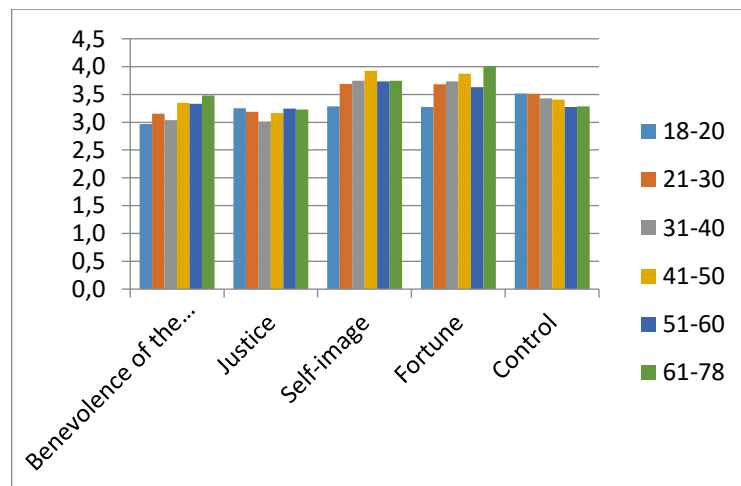


Figure 01. Age differences in world assumptions

### 6.3. Gender differences in indicators of world assumptions of an individual

Compared to men, women demonstrate higher rates of confidence in justice of the surrounding world (3.24 vs 3.10,  $p < 0.05$ ), have a more positive self-image (3.62 vs 3.41,  $p < 0.01$ ) and consider themselves more successful people (3.66 vs 3.35,  $p < 0.001$ ). The effect rate (Kohen's d) is relatively small and is equal to 0.19 for belief in a just world, 0.28 for the self-image, and 0.43 for success (see Table 1).

**Table 01.** Descriptive statistics on indicators of world assumptions in men and women, with the indication of significance of differences

Assumptions	Females			Males			t-value	F-ratio	Cohen's d
	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	N	Mean	Std.Dev.			
Benevolence of the surrounding world	316	3.13	0.81	187	3.06	0.75	0.92	1.17	0.09
Justice	316	3.24	0.75	187	3.10	0.72	2.03*	1.09	0.19
Self-image	316	3.62	0.78	187	3.41	0.74	2.91**	1.11	0.28
Fortune	316	3.66	0.73	187	3.35	0.72	4.73***	1.03	0.43
Control	316	3.44	0.62	187	3.52	0.67	-1.26	1.19	-0.12

\*Note:  $- p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $- p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $- p < 0.001$ .

### 6.4. World assumptions and dispositional personality traits

World assumptions are relatively weakly associated to the most generalized personality traits (see Table 2).

**Table 02.** Relationships between world assumptions and dispositional personality traits (Spearman's r.)

	Honesty	Emotionality	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Consciousness	Openness to experience
Benevolence of the surrounding world	0.20** *	0.02	0.21***	0.27***	0.08	0.09
Justice	0.12	-0.01	0.31***	0.21***	0.23***	0.05
Self-image	-0.03	0.03	0.40***	0.08	0.26***	0.19***
Fortune	0.19** *	0.03	0.19***	0.11**	0.10	0.27***
Control	-0.04	-0.11	0.28***	0.04	0.28***	0.13

\*Note:  $- p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $- p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $- p < 0.001$ .

The only dispositional trait that correlates with all five world assumptions is Extroversion. It is most closely associated with the Self-image ( $r = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Active and sociable people appreciate themselves more highly and probably receive positive support more often from surrounding community. They also rate the world around them as benevolent enough ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and fair ( $r = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The belief that they can control events in life ( $r = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and believe in their own success ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) are inherent to them.

Consciousness is related to three of the five world assumptions, which is behaviorally manifested as organization, discipline, and low impulsivity. Such people believe that everybody is rewarded according to

merit ( $r = 0.23, p < 0.001$ ), and this is one of the reasons why it is important to act in the right way, planning activities helps them to feel control over the situation ( $r = 0.28, p < 0.001$ ), but in general they have a good opinion of themselves ( $r = 0.26, p < 0.001$ ).

Agreeableness (the tendency to make concessions to people, condescension, gentleness) is associated only with attitudes towards the surrounding world — its Benevolence ( $r = 0.27, p < 0.001$ ) and Justice ( $r = 0.21, p < 0.001$ ) and does not correlate with ideas about himself.

Openness to experience, on the contrary, is interconnected only with the feeling of oneself as a worthy ( $r = 0.19, p < 0.001$ ) and successful person ( $r = 0.27, p < 0.001$ ) and is not associated with attitudes towards the surrounding world.

Honesty (sincerity, modesty, lack of propensity to luxury) correlates with Benevolence of the surrounding world ( $r = 0.20, p < 0.001$ ) and the notion of one's own success ( $r = 0.19, p < 0.001$ ).

Emotionality is not correlated with the world assumptions of an individual.

### 6.5. World assumptions and life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is the most general subjective assessment of the respondent's life. When the Diener scale is used for its diagnostics, the criteria the person was guided by in his assessment remain behind the scenes, and only the correspondence of some "ideal" life is noted.

Life satisfaction is associated with all the world assumptions of an individual (correlation coefficients range within 0.16 and 0.33,  $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 03).

**Table 03.** Relationships between world assumptions and life satisfaction (Spearman's  $r$ )

	<b>Benevolence of the surrounding world</b>	<b>Justice</b>	<b>Self-image</b>	<b>Fortune</b>	<b>Control</b>
Life satisfaction	0.16***	0.33***	0.34***	0.31***	0.26***

\*Note:  $- p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $- p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $- p < 0.001$ .

Based on these data, an image of a person with high satisfaction in life can be portrayed – he considers himself a worthy person favoured by fortune, confident in his ability to control events in life and choose the optimal problem-solving strategy, believes that everyone receives what he deserves, as well as believes in benevolence of the world, although to a lesser extent.

Multiple regression analysis enables to specify the data, obtain when using correlation analysis and consider the world assumptions of an individual as predictors of life satisfaction.

At the first stage, socio-demographic indicators such as gender, age, and the presence of siblings, were independent variables. In this case, the coefficient of determination did not reach the level of significance. In the second step, the world assumptions of an individual were added as independent variables, which enabled to explain 17.6% of the variance of life satisfaction (Table 04).

**Table 04.** Primary indicators of regression of the satisfaction with life factor

Indicators	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Age	0.005	0.04	0.065	0.001	0.004	0.011
Gender	0.125	0.098	0.069	0.212	0.092	0.117
Presence of siblings	0.067	0.117	0.031	0.074	0.109	0.034
Benevolence of the surrounding world				-0.048	0.068	-0.040
Justice				0.233	0.073	0.183**
Self-image				0.286	0.071	0.237***
Success				0.129	0.076	0.105
Control				0.100	0.081	0.069
R <sup>2</sup>	0.009			0.176		
F	1.042			9.140***		

\*Note: –  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* –  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* –  $p < 0.001$ .

Self-image and Justice are significant predictors of life satisfaction, as they reflect the features of self-esteem and belief that good people find happiness and success, and bad ones get what they deserve.

## 7. Conclusion

World assumptions of an individual are considered as attitudes towards the world and himself in it. Their role in psychological adaptation is to maintain the stability of the subjective world view in a changing reality. There are relationships between world assumptions and five of the six dispositional personality traits identified in the HEXACO model. Extraversion is most closely associated with them. Greater satisfaction with life is noted in people who have a positive Self-image, believe in the benevolence and justice of the world around them, and assess themselves as successful and able to cope successfully with difficulties.

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