

Happiness, Achievement or Money: Testing a Multidimensional Model of Success among Bulgarian Social Media Users

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Abstract. *Some of the biggest challenges in one's life include self-actualization and achieving success. Feeling successful in turbulent times has become more and more challenging. The goal of this paper is to introduce a multidimensional model of success and test it among a non-representative sample (N = 1063) of digital users in Bulgaria. According to the model, success beliefs are culturally specific and comprise four dimensions: happiness, achievement, material well-being, and social capital. The research method includes non-representative snowball sampling among Bulgarian social media users on Facebook and LinkedIn. A descriptive statistical analysis was used for the validation of data. The results show that participants consider themselves to be moderately successful. Respondents positively associate success with most factors, except for public influence (social capital) and material property (well-being). Digital users associate success the most with happiness and the least with social capital. They perceive success as an intangible and emotional concept, rather than a material one. The participants who feel moderately or completely unsuccessful associate success primarily with material possessions (well-being) and connections (social capital). It is suggested to continue researching this topic in a representative study among Bulgarian and even foreign citizens. The multidimensional model of success is an applicable research tool for future research in business and organizational management.*

Keywords: model of success, happiness, achievement, well-being, social capital, social media users.

Introduction

The concept of success has been examined extensively in social sciences since the early 1900s. A scientific understanding of success emerged from sociological studies conducted in the United States throughout the early 20th century. Charles Horton Cooley proposed a social theory of success, in which success is defined as the active and meaningful engagement in the social process (Sokolova, 2016). To this day success has remained a very popular, but ambiguous concept – both poorly understood, but at the same time, widely promoted as desirable in modern societies. The most important reason for this is that the concept is complicated in terms of its associations. It is frequently portrayed as a well-established, well-understood phenomenon. In the fields of social and cultural studies, it is mostly represented as a variety of different manifestations, such as achievement, well-being, happiness, self-fulfillment, perseverance, social connections, professional success, athletic accomplishments and many others (Church, et al., 2013). This study suggests a multidimensional concept of success and tests it among digital users in Bulgaria.

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Literature review

Modern success and the role of digitization

The literature review presents an operationalization of success, which comprises four elements: achievement, well-being, happiness, and social capital. *Achievement* (Sokolova, 2023) is a widely recognized notion associated with success and individuals who have achieved it, characterized by professional growth, achievement motivation, acknowledgment, and status in society. Attitudes towards achievement are influenced by cultural values and are culturally defined. *Well-being* (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2013); (Sokolova, 2016) is another dimension of success, including psychological well-being, subjective well-being, material well-being, life satisfaction, quality of life, lifestyle choices, and standard of living. Psychological well-being includes individual growth, social competence, and decision-making skills, while subjective well-being refers to overall contentment with life, influenced by factors such as mood, general attitudes, and cultural variations. *Happiness* (Pan & Zhou, 2013); (Sokolova, 2023) research has shown a positive correlation between individual happiness, freedom of choice, career success, and higher income in European countries. Evaluations of happiness are measured using concepts from European and global value studies. *Social capital* (Putnam, 2000); (Sokolova, 2016) is the final component of individual success, encompassing social connections, interactions, socioeconomic status, and social success. Social connections represent support from others, positive interactions between family members, friends, close acquaintances, positive evaluation received from others, and higher social position. Social success encompasses the social aspects of an individual's success, such as developing professional skills, improving goal-setting, forming moral values, building interpersonal connections, investing in personality development, and high social responsibility. Therefore, success is a complex concept that encompasses various dimensions, including achievement, well-being, happiness, social capital, and social influence.

Modern success hasn't escaped the impact of technology on shaping social views. The digitization revolution in Bulgaria is increasingly influencing the cultural identity and communication patterns of Bulgarian citizens. With the growing influence of social media as a source of information for Bulgarians since 2010, it is reasonable to suggest that the digital environment also influences cultural ideas regarding core societal values.

As per data provided by the National Statistical Institute (NSI) (NSI, 2023), over 87% of individuals in Bulgaria have Internet connection in 2022. Out of the total, 79% of them access the Internet on a regular basis (NSI, 2023). The main demography of Internet users comprises individuals between the ages of 16 and 44. From 2017 to 2022, there is an upward trend in the total number of digital users in the country. Digitization, according to Iskra Beleva (Beleva, 2022), is the conversion of analogue communication technologies into digital ones. This shift has a significant impact on every aspect of human existence. In this context, the European Union is promoting the use of digital tools and supporting greater engagement of its people in the digital sphere, as part of its efforts to advance in the field of digital technology (Council of Europe, 2023).

Conceptualizing a multidimensional model of success

Current research is a continuation of author's dissertation (Sokolova, 2016), which presented a pilot study of operationalization of success in Bulgarian and Hungarian societies. The author aimed to conceptualize a multidimensional model of success, applicable to cross-cultural studies. Therefore, based on the literature review the author created a suggestion for a four-dimensional

model of success. The model is based on a combination of theories in social sciences, including social capital theory by Robert Putnam (Putnam, 2000), Life-satisfaction theory by Ed Diener, et al. (Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2013) and Self-Determination Theory (Church, et al., 2013).

The author suggests that success may be classified into four primary dimensions: "achievement", "well-being", "happiness", and "social capital". The dimensions are interrelated categories that mutually impact one another. Each dimension has a function: happiness has an emotional meaning, well-being presents the material aspect of success, achievement is an abstract perception of results, and social capital signifies the impact of the external surroundings (including personal relationships) on the circumstances necessary for success. The dimensions in this model were derived based on a review of scholarly publications in the social sciences, but their interactions must be validated in future research. So far, these are only assumptions, based on reviewed literature.

Table 1. Concepts belonging to the four-dimensional model of success

Achievement	Well-being	Social capital	Happiness
Career development	Mental well-being	Prosperity	Hedonia and eudemonia
Achievement motivation	Subjective well-being	Prestige	Self-awareness
Striving for a successful career	Quality of life	Popularity	Life satisfaction
Recognition	Standard of living	Social status	Positive emotions (e.g. joy)
Leadership	Financial security	Connections	

Source: Author's research (Sokolova, 2016).

The questionnaire utilized in this study was derived from the findings of the author's prior research. In the initial phase of the investigation, a complimentary word association experiment and a questionnaire were employed. The word association test was employed to determine the prevailing concepts of success. The results indicate that the most commonly mentioned notions of success are "happiness" (11.11%), "money" (10.68%), "family" (6.92%), "work" (6.64%), "satisfaction" (4.33%), and "joy" (2.88%). The study ranks the characteristics of success in the following order of significance: happiness (first), achievement (second), well-being (third), and social capital (fourth).

Methodology

The survey was conducted via an online-based questionnaire in Google Forms. It was distributed among 1063 Bulgarian users of Facebook and LinkedIn social media platforms, in the time period between September and December 2023. The sample is non-representative of the Bulgarian population. Digital users were asked to participate in the so-called snowball sampling method. A snowball sample is a non-probability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their own social network. It is applicable to research, where the respondents are hard to reach (TenHouten, 2017). This sampling method limits the representativeness of results, therefore results are not generalizable to the whole population of Bulgaria.

Collected responses were analysed using JASP (v. 0.17.1) statistical software. Statistical methods were descriptive approaches: frequency analyses, binomial test, contingency tables and chi-squared values.

This study aims to evaluate the cultural perceptions of success among Bulgarian digital users using a multidimensional model, presented in the literature review. It aims to identify factors highly associated with success among these users.

The study hypothesizes that the average self-assessment of success is above the midpoint of a 5-point scale, all factors for success are positively recognized, and luck and connections are necessary for success. Word associations with success are evenly distributed among participants, and success is associated with outcomes such as happiness, connections with high-ranking individuals, money, and recognition. No association is found between self-perceptions of success and other variables.

The questionnaire includes 14 items, categorised into three sections – self-assessment of successfulness, associations with factors, conditions, outcomes and signs of success, and demographic characteristics of the surveyed sample.

The table below illustrates how the four dimensions of success are represented in the question items.

Table 2. Dimensions of success represented in question items

Dimensions of success				
Item	Achievement	Happiness	Well-being	Social capital
Factors for success	<i>Professional development</i>	<i>Confidence in my own capabilities</i>	<i>Financial stability</i>	<i>Public influence</i>
	<i>Educational Status</i>	<i>Balance between work and free time</i>	<i>Physical Health</i>	<i>Personal Relationships</i>
	<i>Ability to achieve goals</i>		<i>Mental health</i>	
			<i>Material property</i>	
Conditions for success	Diligence	Luck	Wealth	Connections
Leading sign of success	Achievement	Happiness	Quality of life	Social status
Perceived outcomes of success	Receiving recognition for my achievements	Being happy	Having enough money	Having connections with high-ranking persons in society
Skills necessary for success	Persistence	Cooperation	Self-sufficiency	Communicability
Meaning of the word "success"	Award	Happiness	Money	Family

Source: Author's own research.

The multidimensional model of success focuses on achievement, happiness, well-being, social capital, and family. Achievement is linked to professional development, education, and goal achievement, with diligence and persistence being necessary conditions. Happiness is linked to confidence in one's capabilities and a balance between work and free time, with luck and cooperation as necessary skills. Well-being focuses on financial stability, physical health, mental health, and material property, with wealth being the condition for success. Quality of life is the leading sign of success, with money being the perceived outcome. Social capital involves public

influence, personal relationships, and connections, with communicability being the necessary skill. Family is the perceived outcome of success in this dimension.

The four dimensions of success are interconnected and influence each other. Achievement brings happiness, which contributes to well-being. Social capital enhances goal achievement, leading to increased happiness. Conversely, a lack of success in one dimension can impact others, such as well-being, achievement, happiness, and social capital. Success in life is a balance across these dimensions.

Results and discussions

The respondents' demographic profile primarily consists of individuals in their prime working years and with a higher level of education. They are representations of the generations born between 1980 and 2005.

Table 3. Share of respondents by age

16-24 years	16,09%
25-34 years	26,05%
35-44 years	26,44%
45-54 years	16,86%
55-64 years	11,11%
65+ years	3,45%

Source: Author's own research.

According to this data, the presumption is that the associations formed by these demographic groupings will accurately represent their values and lifestyle. According to the National Statistical Institute (NSI, 2023), there has been a rise in the utilization of digital devices among the Bulgarian populace between 2016 and 2021, with the most rapid expansion observed in mobile phone users. The increase in mobile phone utilization is associated with individuals who have primary or lower levels of education adopting new technology, such as smartphones, for the purpose of consuming content, accessing news, and engaging in purchasing activities. This consequently impacts the way digital users perceive success in life. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural perceptions of success among Bulgarian individuals, it is advisable to carry out a nationally representative survey that accurately reflects the country's current demographic landscape.

Descriptive statistics

In the first survey question respondents were asked to rate how successful they believe they were at the moment of participation. They had to rank their self-perception of success on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (completely unsuccessful) to 5 (completely successful).

Table 4. Self-assessment of success among respondents

How successful do you believe you are at the moment?	
Completely unsuccessful	1,90%
Moderately unsuccessful	4,20%
Neither successful, nor unsuccessful	37,60%
Moderately successful	43,30%
Completely successful	12,90%

Source: Author's own research.

The majority of respondents (43.3%) rated themselves as moderately successful, followed by 37.6% who chose neither successful, nor unsuccessful. Only 12.9% of respondents rated themselves as completely successful, while 6.1% rated themselves as completely or moderately unsuccessful.

Table 5. Descriptive statistical analysis of self-perceptions

Descriptive Statistics	
How successful do you believe you are at the moment?	
Valid	1063
Missing	0
Mean	3.600
Mode	4.000
Median	4.000
Std. Deviation	0.842
Minimum	1.000
Maximum	5.000

Source: Author's own research.

A descriptive analysis of the survey question was completed. The mean score of the respondents was 3.600, indicating that the average self-assessment of successfulness was slightly above the midpoint of the scale, with standard deviation of 0.842. Mode and median values are 4.000, which suggests participants have a very positive self-assessment. The minimum and maximum scores were 1 and 5, respectively, indicating that the full range of the scale was used by the respondents.

Frequency analysis

The second part of empirical analysis includes frequency analyses of data, a binomial test and contingency tables. A binomial test is a statistical procedure that is used to determine if the observed proportion of successes in a sample is significantly different from a hypothesized proportion. In this case, the hypothesized value is 0.5 (indicating no preference).

Table 6. Binomial test of the factors for success

Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion	p
Financial stability	I don't know	43	1063	0.040	< .001
	No	108	1063	0.102	< .001
	Yes	912	1063	0.858	< .001
Professional development	I don't know	51	1063	0.048	< .001
	No	108	1063	0.102	< .001
	Yes	904	1063	0.850	< .001
Educational Status	I don't know	59	1063	0.056	< .001
	No	192	1063	0.181	< .001
	Yes	812	1063	0.764	< .001
Public influence	I don't know	151	1063	0.142	< .001
	No	528	1063	0.497	0.854
	Yes	384	1063	0.361	< .001
	I don't know	8	1063	0.008	< .001

Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion	p
Confidence in my own capabilities	No	5	1063	0.005	< .001
	Yes	1050	1063	0.988	< .001
Ability to achieve goals	I don't know	8	1063	0.008	< .001
	No	35	1063	0.033	< .001
	Yes	1020	1063	0.960	< .001
Physical Health	I don't know	24	1063	0.023	< .001
	No	55	1063	0.052	< .001
	Yes	984	1063	0.926	< .001
Mental health	I don't know	12	1063	0.011	< .001
	No	51	1063	0.048	< .001
	Yes	1000	1063	0.941	< .001
Material property	I don't know	96	1063	0.090	< .001
	No	435	1063	0.409	< .001
	Yes	532	1063	0.500	1.000
Balance between work and free time	I don't know	24	1063	0.023	< .001
	No	91	1063	0.086	< .001
	Yes	948	1063	0.892	< .001
Personal Relationships	I don't know	56	1063	0.053	< .001
	No	91	1063	0.086	< .001
	Yes	916	1063	0.862	< .001
<i>Note.</i> Proportions tested against value: 0.5.					

Source: Author's own research.

Analysis of the results shows that the majority of respondents (85.8%) answered 'Yes', indicating "financial stability" as an important factor. Only 10.2% answered 'No', and 4% answered 'I don't know'. Similar to financial stability, most respondents (85%) answered 'Yes' to "professional development". Only 10.2% responded with 'No', and 4.8% answered 'I don't know'. For the next factor, "educational status", 76.4% of respondents answered 'Yes', while 18.1% chose 'No', and 5.6% responded with 'I don't know'. In "public influence" the responses are more evenly distributed. Here 49.7% answered 'No', 36.1% picked 'Yes', and 14.2% chose 'I don't know'. The p-value for 'No' is 0.854, indicating no significant difference from the hypothesized value of 0.5. However, the p-values for 'Yes' and 'I don't know' are less than 0.001, indicating a significant difference.

"Confidence in one's own capabilities" is one of the three most important factors. Here the vast majority of respondents (98.8%) answered 'Yes', only 0.5% chose 'No', and 0.8% picked 'I don't know'. "Ability to achieve goals" is the other crucial factor. Similarly to confidence in one's own capabilities, most respondents (96%) answered with 'Yes'. Only 3.3% recognized 'No', and 0.8% 'I don't know' as answers. "Physical health" and "mental health" are the other two leading factors. 92.6% of respondents answered 'Yes' to physical health and 94.1% - to mental health. A fraction of participants associate these factors negatively or neutrally.

Interestingly, the factor "material property" caused tentative associations. The responses here are evenly distributed. 50% answered 'Yes', 40.9% answered 'No', and 9% answered 'I don't know'. The p-value for 'Yes' is 1.000, indicating no significant difference from the hypothesized value of 0.5. However, the p-values for 'No' and 'I don't know' are less than 0.001, indicating a significant difference. For "balance between work and free time" most respondents (89.2%)

answered with ‘Yes’, indicating it as an important factor. “Personal relationships” also appears to be an important association. Here most of the respondents (86.2%) answered with ‘Yes’. Only 8.6% answered ‘No’, and 5.3% answered ‘I don’t know’.

In summary, **for most variables, a significant majority of respondents answered ‘Yes’, indicating positive associations with factors for success.** The exceptions are ‘Public influence’ and ‘Material property’, where the responses were more evenly distributed. This shows that respondents have difficulties recognizing them as important or unimportant factors. The p-values indicate that the proportion of responses significantly differs from the hypothesized value of 0.5 for most variables and levels.

Table 7. Binomial test of the word associations with success

Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion	p
Which of the following words do you associate with the meaning of the word "success"?	Award	72	1063	0.068	< .001
	Family	264	1063	0.248	< .001
	Happiness	623	1063	0.586	< .001
	Money	104	1063	0.098	< .001
<i>Note.</i> Proportions tested against value: 0.5.					

Source: Author’s own research.

According to the results above, only 6.8% of respondents associate success with “award”. 24.8% of participants associate it with “family”. The majority of respondents (58.6%) recognize “success” as “happiness”. Finally, 9.8% of respondents associate it with “money”. Therefore, **a significant minority of respondents associate the words with “success”, with the exception of “happiness” where the majority made this association.** The p-values here show that the proportion of responses significantly differs from the hypothesized value of 0.5 for all words.

Table 8. Binomial test of conditions for success

Variable	Level	Count	Total	Proportion	p
Wealth	I don't know	144	1063	0.135	< .001
	No	635	1063	0.597	< .001
	Yes	284	1063	0.267	< .001
Luck	I don't know	88	1063	0.083	< .001
	No	203	1063	0.191	< .001
	Yes	772	1063	0.726	< .001
Diligence	I don't know	8	1063	0.008	< .001
	No	43	1063	0.040	< .001
	Yes	1012	1063	0.952	< .001
Connections	I don't know	140	1063	0.132	< .001
	No	311	1063	0.293	< .001
	Yes	612	1063	0.576	< .001
<i>Note.</i> Proportions tested against value: 0.5.					

Source: Author’s own research.

The following binomial test presents whether respondents consider each of the conditions necessary for success. For “wealth” the majority of respondents (59.7%) picked ‘No’, indicating they do not consider wealth as a condition for success. Only 26.7% answered ‘Yes’, and 13.5% answered ‘I don’t know’. “Luck” was supported by 72.6% of participants, indicating they consider it a condition for success. The vast majority of respondents chose “diligence” (95.2%) as the most

important condition for success. Participants were tentative about the importance of “connections” - the responses are more evenly distributed in this category. 57.6% answered ‘Yes’, 29.3% answered ‘No’, and 13.2% answered ‘I don’t know’. In conclusion, for most variables, a significant majority of respondents consider them as conditions for success, with the exception of wealth where the majority answered ‘No’. The p-values show that the proportion of responses significantly differs from the hypothesized value for all variables and levels.

Table 9. Binomial test of perceived outcomes of success

Binomial Test					
Variable	Level	Counts	Test	Proportion	p
Being happy.	I don't know	12	1063	0.011	< .001
	No	55	1063	0.052	< .001
	Yes	996	1063	0.937	< .001
Having connections with high-ranking persons in society.	I don't know	116	1063	0.109	< .001
	No	755	1063	0.710	< .001
	Yes	192	1063	0.181	< .001
Having enough money.	I don't know	56	1063	0.053	< .001
	No	243	1063	0.229	< .001
	Yes	764	1063	0.719	< .001
Receiving recognition for my achievements.	I don't know	96	1063	0.090	< .001
	No	195	1063	0.183	< .001
	Yes	772	1063	0.726	< .001

Note. Proportions tested against value: 0.5.

Source: Author’s own research.

The vast majority of respondents (93.7%) associate success with being happy. 71% of participants do not associate success with having connections with high-ranking persons in society. Similar percent of participants (71.9%) associate success with having enough money. Only 22.9% disagree here. Receiving recognition for one’s achievements was chosen by 72.6% of the respondents. Only 18.3% do not make this association, and 9% answered with ‘I don’t know’.

Therefore, **for all variables, a significant majority of respondents associate success with the given outcomes, with the exception of ‘Having connections with high-ranking persons in society’ where the majority do not make that association.** The p-values indicate that the proportion of responses significantly differs from the hypothesized value of 0.5 for all variables and levels.

Table 10. Binomial test of necessary skills for success

Determine if these skills are necessary to achieve success in life.					
Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion	p
Persistence	I don't know	12	1063	0.011	< .001
	No	72	1063	0.068	< .001
	Yes	979	1063	0.921	< .001
Cooperation	I don't know	64	1063	0.060	< .001
	No	86	1063	0.081	< .001
	Yes	913	1063	0.859	< .001
Self-sufficiency	I don't know	124	1063	0.117	< .001
	No	226	1063	0.213	< .001

Determine if these skills are necessary to achieve success in life.					
Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion	p
Communicability	Yes	713	1063	0.671	< .001
	I don't know	20	1063	0.019	< .001
	No	45	1063	0.042	< .001
	Yes	998	1063	0.939	< .001
Note. Proportions tested against value: 0.5.					

Source: Author's own research.

Results of the binomial test here show whether there is preference for one or more skills, necessary for success. With 92.1% support, persistence is considered crucial skill for success. Cooperation is supported by 85.9% of respondents, while self-sufficiency gathers 67.1% of positive answers. Communicability is the most supported skill with by very high proportion of respondents (93.9%). Therefore, **all four skills - persistence, cooperation, self-sufficiency, and communicability - are considered necessary for success by a significant proportion of respondents**. The p-values here are also less than 0.001, which indicates statistically significant results. It can be inferred that these skills are necessary to achieve success in life, with one of the skills – **self-sufficiency, being a bit lesser recognized by participants**.

The next contingency tables show the cross-tabulation of some of the survey questions with respondents self-assessment. The first one represents the words associated with success, while the second one denotes the leading sign of success in human life. The tables include rows and columns, representing the five possible responses for each question, and the cells show the frequencies of respondents who chose the corresponding row and column categories. The tables also include the chi-squared test results, which indicate whether there is a significant association between the two variables. The chi-squared value, the degrees of freedom, and the p-value are reported.

The chi-squared test results show that **there is a significant association between self-perceptions of successfulness and the other two variables** - words associated with success and leading sign of success ($p < .001$).

Table 11. Variations between self-perceptions of successfulness and words associated with success among respondents

How successful do you believe you are at the moment?	Which of the following words do you associate with the meaning of the word "success"?				
	Award	Family	Happiness	Money	Total
Completely unsuccessful	0	0	0	23	23
Moderately unsuccessful	0	0	0	44	44
Neither successful, nor unsuccessful	0	0	367	37	404
Moderately successful	0	200	256	0	456
Completely successful	72	64	0	0	136
Total	72	264	623	104	1063

Chi-Squared Tests			
	Value	df	p
X ²	1507.760	12	< .001
Likelihood ratio	1211.636	12	< .001
N	1063		

Source: Author's own research.

The first contingency table shows the distribution of respondents based on their perceived level of success and the words they associate with “success”. All respondents who associate “success” with “award” perceive themselves as completely successful. Respondents who associate “success” with “family” are either moderately successful (200 out of 264) or completely successful (64 out of 264). Respondents who associate “success” with “happiness” are distributed across “neither successful, nor unsuccessful” (367 out of 623), “moderately successful” (256 out of 623), but none of them perceive themselves as completely successful or unsuccessful. The respondents who associate “success” with “money” perceive themselves as either completely unsuccessful (23 out of 104), moderately unsuccessful (44 out of 104), or neither successful nor unsuccessful (37 out of 104).

In summary, **the word associations with “success” vary significantly depending on the respondents’ perceived level of success.** For instance, those who perceive themselves as completely successful tend to associate “success” with “award” or “family”, while **those who do not perceive themselves as successful tend to associate “success” with “money”**. Those who associate “success” with “happiness” fall in the middle of the success spectrum.

Table 12. Variations between self-perceptions of successfulness and the leading sign of success among respondents

How successful do you believe you are at the moment?	Which of the following words represents the leading sign of success in human life?				
	Achievement	Happiness	Quality of life	Social status	Total
Completely unsuccessful	0	0	0	23	23
Moderately unsuccessful	0	0	39	5	44
Neither successful, nor unsuccessful	0	0	404	0	404
Moderately successful	88	334	34	0	456
Completely successful	136	0	0	0	136
Total	224	334	477	28	1063

Chi-Squared Tests			
	Value	df	p
X ²	2319.337	12	< .001
Likelihood ratio	1733.878	12	< .001
N	1063		

Source: Author’s own research.

The second contingency table reveals some interesting patterns, such as that **happiness is the most popular choice as a leading sign of success, followed by quality of life and achievement. Social status is the least popular choice.** Respondents who perceive themselves as completely successful are more likely to choose achievement as the leading sign of success, while those who perceive themselves as moderately successful are more likely to choose happiness. Participants who perceive themselves as completely unsuccessful or moderately unsuccessful are more likely to choose social status or quality of life as the leading sign of success, respectively. No respondent who perceives themselves as neither successful nor unsuccessful chose achievement or happiness as the leading sign of success. They all chose quality of life.

Consequently, research results provide **several conclusions about participants' conceptions of success**. First, the general perceptions of success are strongly associated with positive factors, conditions, outcomes, meanings and skills. The leading dimensions according to responses are achievement and happiness, with the domination of the latter.

Second, in contrast to that, some of the dimensions of success are strongly associated only to a varying degree. **A part of participants fail to acknowledge the components of social capital and well-being as integral aspects of success**. Therefore, this could be explained by user perceptions that don't support the importance of these dimensions.

Third, people who consider themselves unsuccessful to a certain degree, tend to have a more superficial perception of success (e.g. needing money or having connections).

Fourth, interestingly, users recognize self-sufficiency to a lesser degree as a necessary skill for success in life. This phenomenon might be attributed to a deficiency in self-efficacy or to societal changes in Bulgaria that are regarded as diminishing an individual's agency, namely owing to economic factors. Furthermore, participants who consider themselves completely or moderately unsuccessful are more inclined to prioritise social status or quality of life as primary indicators of success. This shows that they acknowledge the tangible and societal components of success, but fail to grasp the significance of intangible aspects such as personal fulfilment and contentment.

In conclusion, the Bulgarian digital users who participated in the survey seem to be a reflection of their beliefs and goals. The majority of respondents are in the prime of their lives and are aware of their own capabilities. This may explain why most participants regard success as an intangible and emotional concept. A minority of the participants experience a lack of satisfaction with their achievements, leading them to associate success primarily with material possessions.

Conclusion

The concept of success remains a popular topic in social sciences, because it is highly valued in modern societies. It carries various manifestations such as achievement, well-being, happiness, self-fulfillment, perseverance, social connections, professional success, and many others. The study tested a multidimensional model of success, created by the author, among digital users in Bulgaria. Results show that general perceptions of success are strongly associated with positive factors, conditions, outcomes, meanings, and skills.

Achievement and happiness are the leading dimensions, with the latter dominating. However, some dimensions of success are associated only to a varying degree, with some participants failing to acknowledge social capital and well-being as integral aspects of success. The results imply not only the positives, but also the negatives of striving for success in modern Bulgaria. Data hint that unsuccessful participants have a shallower view of how success is achieved and manifested. The importance of materialism among under-accomplished participants emerged.

A weakness of the study is lack of representation that is why representative sampling is recommended for future quantitative research. Snowball non-representative sampling is a major limitation for quantitative approaches.

In conclusion, this research topic bears significant importance and requires further investigation. Understanding the cultural basis of motivation for success can benefit policy making in areas such as improving standard of living, workforce motivation, gender equity, diversity and inclusion strategies, and educational reform. By learning about each person's concept of success, policymakers can offer adequate policies for better overall living and bridge the gap between higher and lower income populations.

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