

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# *A Polish language version of Wood et al.'s multidimensional Authenticity Scale*

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## BACKGROUND

There is considerable interest among personality psychologists in authenticity. To provide researchers with a tool to study dispositional authenticity among speakers of Polish, we created a Polish language version of Wood et al.'s multidimensional measure of authenticity. Wood et al.'s measure has 12 items and measures three constructs: four items for self-alienation; authentic living; and accepting external influence.

## PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Participants were 825 Polish adults ( $M_{\text{age}} = 42.7$ ,  $SD = 15.4$ ; 50% women) who were recruited by a professional survey company. Participants completed the newly developed measure of authenticity, and for validation purposes, they completed measures of Ryff's model of well-being, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and stress, the same measures used by Wood et al.

## RESULTS

A confirmatory factor analysis found that the Polish version of the scale had the same three factors as the original

measure developed by Wood et al., and the loadings of the items on the factors were consistent with those presented by Wood et al. The three scales of the new measure were reliable. Moreover, relationships between the authenticity scales and the validation measures were similar to those reported by Wood et al.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present results suggest that our proposed Polish language version of Wood et al.'s multidimensional authenticity scale measures a similar set of constructs to those measured by the original English language scale. Therefore, we believe our new measure should be useful for researchers interested in studying dispositional authenticity among Polish language speakers.

## KEY WORDS

self-esteem; well-being; Ryff; authentic living; self-alienation

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## BACKGROUND

Authenticity is typically conceptualized in terms of the extent to which people are aware of their true selves and the extent to which they behave and think in ways that are consistent with this true self (e.g., Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Moreover, authenticity is a central part of people's self-definitions and is a central part of identity development (Arnett, 2000). In addition, authenticity has been treated as a facilitator of positive human functioning (Sutton, 2020).

Authenticity has been the focus of a large body of research. A recent (March, 2024) Google Scholar search with the terms "authenticity" and "psychology" found 935,000 results. Even if one assumes that this total contains duplicates, indirect references, and so forth, this suggests that there is considerable interest in the topic among psychologists. Nevertheless, to our knowledge, there is no validated Polish-language version of an established measure of authenticity, which may obstruct the study of authenticity among speakers of Polish. To fill this gap, we developed a Polish-language version of a widely used measure of authenticity, the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), and in this article we present this scale and describe the results of analyses of the convergent validity of this scale.

## WHAT IS AUTHENTICITY?

Although authenticity has been defined in various ways, at the core of these different definitions is people's acceptance of who they are. This includes expressing one's true self in word and deed, making deliberate choices that are consistent with one's true self, and accepting responsibility for these choices (e.g., Sutton, 2020). Based on an analysis of Sheldon et al. (1997), Sutton discussed two broad approaches to conceptualizing authenticity: consistency and coherence. As suggested by the label, consistency approaches define authenticity in terms of how consistent people are across different roles or situations. In contrast, coherence is a sort of self-narrative that provides a basis for people to develop continuity even when they may behave inconsistently (at least on the surface) across different situations.

One of the most influential theorists who addressed the issue of authenticity was Carl Rogers. In terms of the consistency/coherence distinction just discussed, Rogers advocated a coherence model of authenticity. In the coherence approach, authenticity is defined as the extent to which a person feels true to him- or herself, with the possibility that he or she may appear to others to behave inconsistently while remaining true to his or her self-concept.

The measure developed by Wood et al. (2008) relied upon Rogers's (1961) person-centered model,

a coherence model. As explained by Barrett-Lennard (1998), this model suggests that there are three related components (or levels) of authenticity: self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. As Wood et al. (2008, p. 386) explain, self-alienation "involves the inevitable mismatch between the conscious awareness and actual experience... subjective experience of not knowing oneself, or feeling out of touch with the true self." Authentic living refers to the "congruence between experience as consciously perceived and behavior... authentic living involves being true to oneself... and living in accordance with one's values and beliefs." Accepting external influence "involves the extent to which one accepts the influence of other people and the belief that one has to conform to the expectations of others."

## CORRELATES OF AUTHENTICITY

Although there is some disagreement about the strength and regularity of such relationships, generally speaking, authenticity has consistently been found to be positively related to well-being, broadly defined (Rivera et al., 2019; Sutton, 2020). In terms of the Authenticity Scale per se, in their validation study, Wood et al. (2008) found that authentic living was positively related to all six dimensions of well-being as defined by Ryff (1989), whereas accepting external influences and self-alienation were negatively related to these same six dimensions. Similarly, Wood et al. also found that authentic living was positively related to self-esteem and to satisfaction with life, and that accepting external influence and self-alienation were negatively related to self-esteem and satisfaction with life. Finally, Wood et al. also found that authentic living was negatively related to perceived stress in one's life, and accepting external influence and self-alienation were negatively related to perceived stress.

Sutton (2020) discussed the possibility that these relationships, and numerous other positive relationships between authenticity and well-being, were "likely due both to its direct effects on well-being and its indirect buffering effects" (p. 11). Moreover, Sutton continued: "While this study cannot draw conclusions about the directionality of the authenticity-well-being relationship, there is emerging evidence that it is unidirectional with authenticity predicting later well-being." Sutton also mentioned that presently, it is not known why authenticity is related to well-being and engagement. The mechanisms are not yet understood.

Regardless, the present study presents a Polish language version of Wood et al.'s Authenticity Scale, with the hope that studies of speakers of Polish will advance our understanding of these issues. To maximize the continuity between the original measure and the new measure, we used the same measures to validate the Polish version of the Authenticity Scale

as those used by Wood et al. (2008): well-being (including stress), self-esteem, and satisfaction with life.

## PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

### PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 825 Polish adults who were recruited by Ariadna, a Polish survey company. The average age of participants was 42.7 years ( $SD = 15.4$ ), 50.4% of participants were women, 51.97% ended their formal education at high school/vocational college, and 39.6% lived in a village or a city with less than 20,000 inhabitants.

### ETHICAL STATEMENT

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki regarding the rights of research participants. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the SWPS University in Warsaw (approval no. 11/2022).

### MEASURES

The present study was intended to validate a Polish language version of the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), which was originally published in English. The Authenticity Scale has 12 items that measure

three constructs: self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. A Polish language version of this scale, which consisted of Polish versions of the 12 items from the original scale, was developed by a research team that had members who were fluent in both Polish and English. In addition, preliminary versions of the scale were pre-tested on small samples to ensure the items were comprehensible. The final version of the scale is presented in Table 1. The original English language items are included for comparison. Participants responded to these items using a seven-point scale with endpoints labeled 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*).

Participants also completed measures to examine the convergent validity of the new scale. We administered scales that measured constructs that had been used by Wood et al. to examine the convergent validity of the Authenticity Scale in their initial study. These scales were Polish language versions of measures of: Ryff's model of well-being (Karaś & Cieciuch, 2017), Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Łaguna et al., 2007), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Jankowski, 2015). Responses to the Ryff well-being items and the SWLS items were made using seven-point scales with endpoints labeled: 1 (*definitely/strongly disagree*) and 7 (*definitely/strongly agree*). Responses to the self-esteem items were made using five-point scales with endpoints labeled: 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*).

Participants also completed a six-item measure of stress/worry that was created for this study. These

**Table 1**

*Authenticity Scale: Original English items and Polish language equivalents*

1	I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular.	Myślę, że lepiej jest być sobą, niż być popularnym/a/lubianym/a.
2	I don't know how I really feel inside.	Nie wiem, jak tak naprawdę czuję się w środku.
3	I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others.	Jestem pod silnym wpływem opinii innych ludzi.
4	I usually do what other people tell me to do.	Zazwyczaj robię to, co inni mówią mi, że mam robić.
5	I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do.	Zawsze czuję, że muszę robić to, czego oczekują ode mnie inni ludzie.
6	Other people influence me greatly.	Inni ludzie mają na mnie duży wpływ.
7	I feel as if I don't know myself very well.	Czuję, jakbym nie znał/a siebie zbyt dobrze.
8	I always stand by what I believe in.	Zawsze stoję murem za tym, w co wierzę.
9	I am true to myself in most situations.	Jestem wierny/a sobie w większości sytuacji.
10	I feel out of touch with the real me.	Czuję, że nie mam kontaktu z moim prawdziwym Ja.
11	I live in accordance with my values and beliefs.	Żyję w zgodzie ze swoimi wartościami i przekonaniem.
12	I feel alienated from myself.	Czuję się wyobcowanym/a od siebie {samego/samej}.

items concerned both personal stressors and environmental stressors. All items started with the stem “How stressed are you because of...” The items were COVID-19, climate change, Polish economic situation, Eastern border situation – conflict, personal financial situation, and personal problems (family, work, etc.). Participants responded using a five-point scale with endpoints labeled 1 (*not all*) and 5 (*extremely stressed*).

#### DATA AVAILABILITY

All data are freely available via the Open Science framework. The OSF site for this study includes a fully annotated SPSS file and an accompanying codebook, and a csv data file. The url is: [https://osf.io/ehz8v/?view\\_only=6b9b04a1f7834e4081fd96e44e88d0fa](https://osf.io/ehz8v/?view_only=6b9b04a1f7834e4081fd96e44e88d0fa)

## RESULTS

### CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS OF AUTHENTICITY ITEMS

We examined the factor structure of the proposed measure of authenticity with a series of confirmatory factor analyses. We used Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis that examined the fit between the data and a three factor model. Replicating the model of Wood et al., we modeled items 1, 8, 9, and 11 as observed measures of a latent construct of authentic living, items 2, 7, 10, and 12 as observed measures of a latent construct of self-alienation, and items 3, 4, 5, and 6 as observed measures of a latent construct of accepting external influence. The covariances between the factors were left to vary freely.

This analysis found that the proposed three-factor model fit the data well (CFI = .989, TLI = .985, SRMR = .023, RMSEA = .038, 95% CI [.028; .047]). Consistent with expectations, items 1, 8, 9, and 11 had significant loadings on the first factor (authentic living). The loadings were .581, .729, .811, and .826, respectively. Items 2, 7, 10, and 12 had significant loadings on the second factor (self-alienation). These were .777, .841, .816, and .844, respectively. Items 3, 4, 5, and 6 had significant loadings on the third factor (accepting external influence). These were .818, .693, .802, and .772, respectively. The estimated standardized covariances between latent variables were: authentic living and self-alienation,  $-.526$ ; authentic living and accepting external influence,  $-.467$ ; and self-alienation and accepting external influence,  $.765$ . Similar to Wood et al., we also fit a single-factor model, and similar to Wood et al., this model did not fit the data well (CFI = .754, TLI = .699, SRMR = .103, RMSEA = .170, 95% CI [.162; .178]). Consistent with this, comparisons of the model fits found that the

three-factor model fit the data better than a single-factor model,  $\chi^2(51) = 110.78$  vs.  $\chi^2(54) = 1345.01$ .

To validate the factor structure further, we calculated the average variance extracted (AVE), following the guidelines of Fornell and Larcker (1981). For all three factors the AVE was above .5, which is the commonly accepted cutpoint for establishing the validity of a scale based on factor scores. See Hair et al. (2010, pp. 665–666) for a discussion of using AVEs to evaluate factor solutions.

Based on these analyses, we computed separate scores representing authentic living, self-alienation, and accepting external influence. Authentic living was defined as the mean of responses for items 1, 8, 9, and 11, self-alienation was defined as the mean of responses for items 2, 7, 10, and 12, and accepting external influence was defined as the mean of responses for items 3, 4, 5, and 6. These scale scores were reliable (McDonald's  $\omega$ ), .82 (authentic living), .89 (self-alienation), and .85 (accepting external influence). Means and standard deviations were: authentic living,  $M = 5.18$  ( $SD = 0.88$ ); self-alienation,  $M = 3.10$  ( $SD = 1.23$ ); and accepting external influence,  $M = 3.36$  ( $SD = 1.13$ ).

### COMPARISONS OF MEAN SCORES

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA found that mean scores for the three subscales were significantly different,  $F(2, 1648) = 897.34$ ,  $p < .001$ . Follow-up tests (contrasts) found that scores for authentic living were significantly greater than scores for either self-alienation or accepting external influence, both  $ps < .001$ . Scores for accepting external influence were significantly higher than scores for self-alienation ( $p < .001$ ).

### VALIDATING MEASURES: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS WITH AUTHENTICITY

Summary statistics for the measures used to assess the convergent validity of our new measure and correlations between the three subscales of the new measure and these validating measures are presented in Table S1 in the Supplementary materials. The pattern of correlations in the present study was similar to the patterns of correlations presented by Wood et al. (2008, Tables 7 and 8, p. 396). Authentic living was positively correlated with self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and the six subscales of Ryff's model of well-being. In contrast, self-alienation and acceptance of external influence were negatively correlated with self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and the six subscales of Ryff's model of well-being. Self-alienation and acceptance of external influence were positively correlated with perceived stress.



MULTIPLE REGRESSION: CORRELATIONS OF AUTHENTICITY WITH WELL-BEING

Scores on all three subscales were significantly correlated with all measures of well-being (except for the correlation between authentic living and stress), and scores on the three subscales were correlated with one another. The correlations between the subscales raise questions about the independence of relationships between well-being and these subscales. To answer such questions, we conducted a series of analyses in which scores for individual measures of well-being were regressed onto scores for the three subscales of authenticity.

The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 2. As can be seen from these results, with one exception, authentic living and self-alienation were significantly associated with well-being, whereas accepting external influence was significantly associated with only autonomy and stress. The correlation between self-alienation and accepting external influence was .66, and so it is not surprising that both of these measures were not significant predictors of well-being in most of these regression analyses. Self-alienation and accepting external influence shared approximately 44% of their variance, and in the present case, self-alienation was associated more reliably with well-being than accepting external influence was.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

On an exploratory basis, we examined gender differences in the factor structure we found. The factor structures of women and men did not differ. Using Mplus, we found support for configural invariance

(CFI and TLI > .97), scalar invariance (CFI and TLI > .97), and metric invariance (CFI and TLI > .97). A copy of this analysis can be found in the supplemental materials. We also examined gender differences in relationships between authenticity and well-being in a series of regression by group analyses, also using Mplus. With one exception, coefficients that were statistically significant for women were significant for men, and vice versa. In the analysis of stress, for women, the coefficient for accepting external influence was significant,  $\beta = .12, p = .028$ , whereas for men this same coefficient was not statistically significant,  $\beta = .10, p = .082$ .

DISCUSSION

In a sample of 825 Polish adults we found that the proposed Polish language version of Wood et al.'s (2008) Authenticity Scale had the same factor structure as the original version and that correlations between the three subscales and a set of validation measures were similar to the correlations reported by Wood et al. Moreover, mean scores on the three subscales were similar to those reported by Wood et al. Although Wood et al. did not report the results of comparisons of subscale means, the pattern of mean differences we found was largely consistent with the pattern reported by Wood et al. across the three studies for which they reported means, i.e., authentic living scores were greater than scores on self-alienation and accepting external influence.

In addition to validating the proposed scale, the present results also suggest that authenticity exists and is manifested among Poles in a similar fashion to how it exists and is manifested in other cultures, at least Western industrialized cultures. Further con-

Table 2

Results of regression analyses of well-being on authenticity

	F	R <sup>2</sup>	Authentic living	Self-alienation	Accepting external influence
Autonomy	264.30	.49	.37***	-.10**	-.39***
Environmental mastery	158.05	.37	.24***	-.44***	-.03
Growth	103.86	.28	.33***	-.32***	.05
Self-acceptance	92.52	.25	.15***	-.42***	.01
Purpose	52.63	.16	.11***	-.32***	-.02
Positive relations	104.09	.28	.22***	-.38***	-.01
Self-esteem	119.45	.30	.17***	-.45***	-.002
SWLS	19.99	.07	.07 <sup>a</sup>	-.22***	.01
Stress	32.37	.11	.15***	.28***	.11**

Note. All F-tests were significant at  $p < .001$ . For individual coefficients: \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , <sup>a</sup> $p < .10$ .

firmation of this similarity is provided by the correspondence of the present results to those reported by Borawski (2021), who also found positive relationships between authenticity and well-being among a sample of Poles. It should be noted that Borawski used a different measure of authenticity, a measure proposed by Kernis and Goldman (2006), and the similarity of Borawski's results to the present results supports the validity of the present findings.

#### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE THREE SUBSCALES AND WELL-BEING

Consistent with the results of previous research, scores on the three subscales of the Authenticity Scale were correlated. These correlations were stronger in the present sample than they were in the original validation study (Wood et al., 2008), but they were not sufficiently strong to call into question the validity of the underlying three-factor structure of the measure. Nevertheless, our results suggest that authentic living and self-alienation are more important in terms of understanding relationships between authenticity and well-being than accepting external influence is. Although not unimportant, accepting external influence does not seem to play as central a role in determining well-being as authentic living and self-alienation.

The fact that authentic living and self-alienation were related more closely to well-being than accepting external influence replicates the results of Lutz et al. (2023) at both the trait and state levels. Moreover, Lenton et al. (2016) suggested that accepting another's influence may indicate greater rather than lesser authenticity at least at the state or situational level. For example, if other people share your values, it is authentic to accept their influence, and it would be inauthentic to reject their influence simply to maintain your independence. It is not clear how well Lenton et al.'s argument applies to dispositional (trait) levels of analysis.

#### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although we have no reason to believe that our sample was biased in any way that would have influenced our results, it is possible that it was. Replication on another sample, obtained in a different way, can address this possibility. Aside from bias, there is also the issue of the extent to which the present results would occur in a sample of people of a specific age. For example, would authenticity have the same factor structure among older adults or among emerging adults as it did in the present age-balanced sample? We have no reason to believe that the factor structures of samples of different ages would differ

from the structure we found, although it is possible that they would.

There is also the issue of the stability of scores on the new measure. Stability can be evaluated in both absolute and relative terms. Absolute stability refers to how similar scores are across time. Absolute stability does not involve comparisons with others. For example, if someone has a score of 4.5 for authentic living at time 1, what score does he/she have at time 2? Relative stability refers to the extent to which a person's score relative to others remains the same across time. Typically, this is measured with a correlation of some kind. Given that the present study collected data only once, it cannot address such issues. Doing this will require a study in which data are collected from the sample on multiple occasions.

Regardless, we hope that the availability of this measure will allow scholars who work in Polish to expand the scope of their work to include authenticity. Such work could include studies of clinical populations, of individuals who excel in certain activities, and of artists and individuals in various creative domains, to name a few. The potential application is considerable. We believe that authenticity is an important part of people's life experiences, and the availability of this measure should help researchers understand the life experiences of speakers of Polish, of which there are over 40 million worldwide (Eberhard et al., 2024).

#### CONCLUSIONS

The present results suggest that the proposed Polish language version of Wood et al.'s (2008) multidimensional measure of authenticity is psychometrically sound and measures constructs similar to those proposed by Wood et al. The confirmatory factor analyses found strong support for a three-factor model that consisted of the same three factors proposed by Wood et al. The items that loaded on each of these three factors constituted reliable scales, and the correlations of these scale scores with other measures confirmed the validity of these scales as measures of the constructs they were intended to measure. In sum, we can recommend with confidence the use of this new measure as a measure of dispositional authenticity for Polish language speakers.

*Supplementary materials are available on the journal's website.*

#### DISCLOSURES

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The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the SWPS University in Warsaw (Approval No. 11/2022).

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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