Self-Complexity and Well-Being: A Short Evaluation

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Abstract

Self-complexity is defined as nonoverlapping aspects of the self. The pioneering research of Linville underlined the role of self-complexity in well-being. The basic proposition is that self-complexity can act as a buffer against stress; when one aspect is threatened, the other undamaged aspects of the self will protect the individual's core self. Following Linville's propositions, several researchers tested the role of self-complexity on various well-being outcomes such as depression and emotional distress. Results of these studies are mixed in terms of the functions of self-complexity. Even though there is support for the positive effects of self-complexity, some studies revealed the negative and burdening effect of self-complexity on well-being. The inconsistency between different studies may be related to measurement problems and how researchers approached self-complexity. This paper addresses basic findings of self-complexity and discusses the conditions in which the buffering effect of self-complexity is observed.

Keywords: Self-complexity, well-being, distinct selves, stress, buffering effect

Benlik Karmaşıklığı ve İyilik Hali: Kısa Bir Değerlendirme

Öz

Benlik karmaşıklığı, benliğin birbiriyle örtüşmeyen yönleri olarak tanımlanır. Linville'in öncü araştırması, benlik karmaşıklığının iyilik halindeki rolüne dikkat çekmiştir. Temel öneri, benlik karmaşıklığının strese karşı bir tampon vazifesi görebileceğidir; benliğin bir yönü tehdit edildiğinde, benliğin zarar görmemiş diğer yönleri bireyin öz benliğini koruyacaktır. Linville'in önermelerini takiben, birçok araştırmacı, benlik karmaşıklığının, depresyon ve duygusal sıkıntı gibi çeşitli iyilik hali çıktıları üzerindeki rolünü test etmiştir. Bu çalışmaların bulguları benlik karmaşıklığının işlevleri açısından karışıktır. Benlik karmaşıklığının olumlu sonuçları olduğunu destekleyen bulgular olsa da bazı araştırmalar benlik karmaşıklığının iyilik hali üzerindeki olumsuz ve külfetli etkisini ortaya koymuştur. Farklı araştırmalar arasındaki tutarsızlık, ölçüm problemleri ve araştırmacıların benlik karmaşıklığını nasıl ele aldığı ile ilgili olabilir. Bu yazı, benlik karmaşıklığıyla ilgili temel bulgularını ele almakta ve benlik karmaşıklığının tampon etkisinin gösterdiği koşulları tartışmaktadır.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Benlik karmaşıklığı, iyilik hali, farklı benlikler, stres, tampon etkisi

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Linville (1985) advised that "do not put all your eggs in one cognitive basket" (p. 94) by changing the adage "do not put all your eggs in one basket." She suggested that people have different representations of themselves. They mentally organize self-related knowledge in varying self-aspects, which are different cognitive structures about self. The self-aspects consist of different roles, activities, traits, and behaviors. If people keep their various selves distinct, threats or adverse events to one aspect of the self, such as failure or low evaluation, may not affect others (Linville, 1987). The number of nonoverlapping aspects of self, which are representations of self that correspond to several roles, relations, contexts, or activities, are defined as self-complexity (Linville, 1987). In other words, Self-complexity is a person's knowledge about his/her unrelated, separate, and distinct cognitive structures (Linville, 1985) including social roles (lawyer, friend, mother), relationships (colleague, competitor, nurturer), activities (running, playing tennis, writing), superordinate traits (hard-working, creative), goals (career success), and so on (Linville, 1987, p. 664). The greater self-complexity implicates having self-representation that encompasses an ample number of self-concepts along with a great distinction among them. If people have high self-complexity, they function better under the threat of stress.

The distinctiveness and the number of selves are vital for the buffering effect (Linville,1987). The significance of self-complexity can be realized in its power to alleviate the impact of negative experiences. If the self is represented in complex and distinct cognitive organizations, it can moderate the unhealthy consequences of stress on physical and psychological outcomes. Linville (1985, 1987) explains the stress-buffering effect of self-complexity through the affective spillover model. According to the model, high self-complexity prevents the emotional influence of positive and adverse events than low self-complexity (Linville, 1987). Having many distinct self-aspects prevents the spread of the effect caused by a recently activated aspect of self to other aspects of the self (Rothermund & Meiniger, 2004). Besides, having greater self-aspects can serve as a buffer against stress-related illnesses and depression. Alternative self-aspects provide a new focus for the individual's self-appraisal following stressful events.

Linville (1987) underlined that if a person has various self-aspects, which are differentiated, they get the advantage of self-aspects buffering effect. However, if some aspects of the self are closely related, the thoughts and feelings about one self-aspect are more likely to spill over to another. Conversely, having more self-aspects facilitates unrelated selves to remain unaffected. When one aspect of the self is threatened (and if we assume that this aspect of the self is independent of other aspects), individuals may dwell on another aspect of the self to feel positive feelings and emotions (Linville, 1987). Consequently, adverse events influence only a small portion of total self-representations. Self-complexity can also reduce the probability of affective extremity, a situation in which individuals who have few aspects of self are more extremely influenced by life events and experience more significant fluctuations in psychological well-being after adverse life events. People who have low self-complexity experience greater variability in their mood (Linville, 1985; 1987). Therefore, Linville (1987) suggested that they are more likely to develop depression, psychosomatic symptoms, and illnesses after stressful events.

Following Linville's self-complexity model, different studies supported Linville regarding well-being outcomes of self-complexity. For example, Gramzow and his

colleagues (2000) found that self-complexity is related to greater endurance against frustration. People with high self-complexity have a heightened ability to cope with adverse events, and they also undergo lower levels of illnesses under a high level of stress (Linville, 1987). Considering the responses to a relationship breakup, Smith and Cohen (1993) declared that self-complexity functions as a life stress buffer; participants with lower self-complexity were more upset after the dissolution of their romantic relationships. The adverse impact of negative events on psychological distress weakened as self-complexity increased. When individuals' relationships overlap significantly with other unrelated self-aspects, people are more likely to avoid future relationships than those with more unaffected self-aspects (Smith & Cohen, 1993). A recent study conducted by Perry and her colleagues (Perry et al., 2020) revealed similar results. The authors reported that individuals with lower self-complexity report fewer depressive symptoms and better regulate their emotions than individuals with higher self-complexity when they have "a positive event (having a date on Valentine's day)" (p. 1276). However, this situation becomes reversed when individuals having lower self-complexity have "a negative event (defined as not having a date on Valentine's day)" (p. 1276).

Self-complexity also plays a role in coping mechanisms toward failure. Dixon and Baumeister (1991) revealed that dire implications of failure could be buffered by self-complexity since many aspects of the self are unaffected by the failure. Their study showed that people with low self-complexity have an increased vulnerability to low mood. The spreading of distressing thoughts following a negative event is more likely for those people. The failure led to improvements in people's subsequent performance with high self-complexity while impaired people with low self-complexity (Dixon & Baumeister, 1991). The findings suggested that depending on the complexity of the self, the same failure threat may evoke different coping styles.

Linville (1987) investigated the relationship between build-up stress and consequential depression and illness to examine the self-complexity buffer hypothesis. The results revealed that self-complexity moderated the relationship between stress and psychological and physical problems when people under stress. Self-complexity also enables individuals to resist adverse health-related outcomes of stress. Stressful events are only experienced in one aspect of the self; other aspects remain intact. Linville (1987) further revealed that participants with high self-complexity experienced less physical and mental health consequences for high-level stress. However, participants with low self-complexity were less likely to experience negative health consequences when there was no stress. Self-complexity is reasonably advantageous under high pressure (Linville,1987).

A further study conducted by Rothermund and Meiniger (2004) on the relationship between self-complexity and depression supported that self-complexity produces a stress-buffering effect. The greater number of self-aspects undermined the detrimental impact of negative experiences on depression. Rothermund and Meiniger (2004) concluded that to buffer the impact of undesirable life events, self-complexity does not necessitate high distinctiveness of self-aspects. However, this buffering effect was limited to adverse life events only; the number of self-aspects did not buffer the relation between positive life events and depression. Even positive events are as important as negative ones in depression; self-complexity fails to moderate the association between positive experiences and depression (Rothermund & Meiniger, 2004).

The accumulating evidence reveals inconsistent results about the buffering influence of self-complexity. In their meta-analysis, Rafaeli-Mor and Sternberg (2002) examined articles about self-complexity and well-being published between 1985 and 2000. Their analysis of 70 studies revealed that when authors approached self-complexity as an individual difference, it was slightly and negatively linked to well-being. Moreover,

when the stress-buffering influence of self-complexity is taken into account, the researchers obtained mixed results. Rafaeli-Mor and Sternberg (2002) concluded that the association between self-complexity and well-being is complex. The results offered support for a buffering effect, but it was a little one. The effect of self-complexity is weak when the stress is objective and identifiable. Rafaeli-Mor and Steinberg (2002) suggested that a weak relationship between self-complexity and well-being may stem from statistical overestimation. Other studies yielded positive interaction between self-complexity and well-being, giving an equal likelihood that self-complexity may exacerbate negative mood.

The benefits of self-complexity remain unclear. For instance, through two studies, Ryan and his colleagues (2005) revealed that self-complexity is not directly related to better mental health outcomes or adjustment. The greater self-complexity is positively associated with depressive symptoms and physical symptoms (Ryan et al., 2005). More self-complexity might be associated with chronic low-level stress because of conflicting self-aspect requirements (Donahue et al., 1993; Ryan et al., 2005). Moreover, Woolfolk and his colleagues (1999) obtained a positive association between high self-complexity and experienced depression over nine months.

Correspondingly, Ryan and his colleagues (2005) remarked that what is predictive in mental health outcomes and perceived stress is self-aspects' authenticity. Authenticity was defined as self-aspects that are personally meaningful to the person's true self (Ryan et al., 2005). The interaction of self-complexity and authenticity showed that physical symptoms are apparent most across people with low complexity and low authenticity. In contrast, people with high self-complexity and high authenticity had the slightest physical symptoms. These findings imply that well-being is mainly related to the quality of self-aspects; the absolute quantity and independence of self-aspects are not directly related to well-being (Ryan et al.,2005).

Furthermore, the vast number of research included nonclinical participants. Compared to nonclinical participants, participants with a diagnosis (mostly those suffering from depression) had lower self-complexity levels (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). This finding may suggest that low self-complexity is a risk factor for psychopathology, as Linville suggested (1987). However, as Rafaeli-Mor and Steinberg (2002) emphasized, low self-complexity levels may reflect one's decreased motivation to get more aspects to self when they have psychopathology. Thus, it is challenging to conclude unless assessing self-complexity before the onset of depression.

Another consideration regarding the effect of self-complexity on well-being is the specific stress in question. For instance, Brown and Rafaeli (2007) demonstrated that different adverse life events might have differing self-complexity interactions. The intensity of the adverse event is also notable. Self-complexity's buffering effects emerge only for severe stress. Thus, Linville's self-complexity model may be valid only under acute stress (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). While people are experiencing minor stress, such as daily hassles, high self-complexity be a burden to participants' well-being (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). Halberstadt and colleagues (1999; as cited in Koch & Shepperd, 2004) manipulated self-complexity by priming participants to think of themselves in the future as either having low self-complexity (three self-aspects) or having high self-complexity (seven self-aspects). Participants in the high self-complexity condition declared more struggle in decision making and therefore feel less satisfied with their hobbies and future careers than participants in the low self-complexity condition. These findings suggested that when people make a self-relevant decision considering many aspects of the self, they experience difficulty in their decisions since there are many things to consider and evaluate.

In some cases, a distinctive self-concept may be a burden and may not be advantageous for the individual (Rafaeli-Mor and Steinberg, 2002). Donahue and her colleagues (1993) asserted that fragmentation of self might result in the absence of a core self, pathological for individuals. People with highly differentiated self-concepts may be more distressed and give more negative reactions to distressful events, giving fewer positive reactions to positive life events (Donahue et al., 1993). According to the meta-analysis (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002), Donahue and her colleagues (Donahue et al., 1993) are not fully supported; self-complexity was not related to unsatisfactory results under distressful events and slightly related to unsatisfactory results in zero-order studies. Nevertheless, low self-complexity can also be beneficial in some situations. In their research testing the spillover hypothesis through three studies, McConnell and his colleagues (2009) revealed that since people with low self-complexity give more strong reactions to life experiences, they are likely to give improved well-being outcomes when positive agents (e.g., qualified support from others) are present. However, these individuals are also likely to give relatively decreased well-being outcomes when damaging agents (e.g., negative experiences in the past) are present. (McConnell et al., 2009). The authors asserted that lower self-complexity should amplify or intensify people's life experiences. The results suggest that when individuals with low self-complexity have satisfying social support, have experienced favorable life events in the past, and possess desirable personality traits, they report fewer depressive symptoms and illnesses (McConnell et al., 2009). Thus, low self-complexity can be advantageous over high self-complexity under some conditions.

Source of the Inconsistent Findings: Measurement Problem

Many researchers criticized the measurement power of Linville's self-complexity scale (e.g., Solomon & Haaga, 2003). The methodology used in self-complexity research was also questionable since studies conducted by social psychologists and clinical psychologists have differing results. The social psychologists reported more substantial effects for self-complexity than reports of clinical psychologists, and also, they are often in the opposite direction (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002).

These conflicting results may raise concerns about whether self-complexity is measured efficiently or not. Traditionally, researchers measured self-complexity by using a card sorting task (Linville, 1985). Participants are given 33 cards and requested to form groups that represent their self-concepts and select and organize self-relevant traits for each group. They can use the same traits for different groups and can decide the number of the traits (Linville, 1985). The matrix that researchers create through using the obtained aspects * traits is summarized by H statistics (for detailed information see Luo et al., 2008). Researchers use H statistics in translating the contents of card sorts into meaningful statistics. They assume that High H reflects high self-complexity and high distinction among self-aspects whereas low H reflects low self-complexity concerning both number and a high degree of relatedness (Solomon & Haaga, 2003). Linville (1987) stated that high self-complexity means having many self-aspects that are nonredundant regarding traits used. On the other hand, low self-complexity stems from either having few self-aspects or using redundant traits. Linville (1987) considered H measure as an indicator of the number of self-aspect and the difference between these self-aspects. Even though many researchers used this statistics, there are many shortcomings in self-complexity measurement (Rafaeli-Mor et al., 1999). These shortcomings, which were considered peculiarly important, will be discussed below.

Firstly, Rafaeli-Mor and his colleagues (1999) stated that the H measure does not consider both mechanisms that constitute self-complexity; the number of the self-aspects

an individual has and the degree of distinctiveness/overlap between these aspects. As the self-complexity model of Linville (1987) proposes, the association between H scores and the number of self-aspects is robust (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). Therefore, the results may differ depending on the researcher's use of preset self-aspects (e.g., Woolfolk et al., 1999), self-generated self-aspects (e.g., Linville, 1987), or manipulated number of self-aspects (e.g., Halberstadt, 1997).

Equally important, the concept of self-complexity also entails maintaining dissimilar, distinct self-aspects. However, the H value fails to identify the distinctiveness of features describing self-aspects (Luo et al., 2008). When the correlation between the H value and the degree of overlap is examined, the researchers found mixed correlations between them: none, positive, or negative. Luo and her colleagues (Luo et al., 2008) performed the mathematical analysis of H value with a simulation study of trait-sorting data. Their results showed a curved association between overlapping self-aspects and H score. For instance, the H value is maximum when the degree of overlap is .50. The H value is influenced by a uniform distribution of traits across all group combinations. For this reason, disregarding the overlap is large or small; a more uniform distribution of traits leads to greater self-complexity when the number of self-aspects is equal (Luo et al., 2008).

The deficiency of the H measure may lie behind some puzzling results in self-complexity. It is essential to realize that self-complexity is not the mere number of self-aspects. Rather, it is the capability of self-aspects to regulate depression and illnesses related to stress (Linville, 1987). Similarly, Rafaeli-Mor and Steinberg (2002) argued that the buffering role of self-complexity might be determined by the extent to which different aspects overlap, not by the number of aspects. Since the overlap cannot be efficiently measured, studies give poor results about the effect of self-complexity.

Another shortcoming of the measurement is related to the poor internal consistency of H statistics. Scores derived from valence split analyses of negative and positive sub-sets show a weaker correlation than two random subsets (Rafaeli-Mor et al., 1999). Moreover, self-complexity may have emphasized positive self-complexity by including more positive than negative traits. This measurement may not accurately reflect participants' self as it prevents participants from selecting appropriate traits to describe negative self-aspects. This measurement may fail to identify people having negative self-aspects. For instance, depressed individuals may seem low in self-complexity since they may not be identified with different positive aspects. Instead, they may be identified with several negative self-aspects (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). The studies consider this weakness and measure positive and negative self-complexity separately (e.g., Woolfolk et al., 1999). However, this separation leads them to move away from the theoretical model of Linville (1987). Moreover, they find an inconsistent relationship between positive self-complexity and negative self-complexity, which creates inconclusive evidence to regard them as distinct theoretical constructs. The distinction between different self-complexities may be responsible for surprising findings (Koch & Shepperd, 2004).

Conclusion

The literature reviewed above gives mixed results about the function of self-complexity. Basically, some studies suggest positive outcomes of self-complexity while other studies show negative outcomes. To summarize, research revealed that, when individuals have differentiated self-aspects, these aspects may have a stress-buffering effect. They can act as a buffer against stress-related physical and mental illnesses, psychosomatic symptoms, depression. Furthermore, individuals having high levels of self-complexity are better able to endure against frustration and failure, cope better with

adverse events, such as dissolution of romantic relationships. However, there are other studies showing that the relationship between self-complexity on well-being is unclear. Several studies suggested that there may be a slightly negative relationship between self-complexity on well-being; self-complexity is not directly related to better health outcomes as suggested by other studies. Moreover, other studies revealed that the advantageous effect of self-complexity is seen only under high stressful and severe conditions.

The mixed results about the function of self-complexity may imply that there is a need for more accurate measurement tools to determine the effectiveness of self-complexity in well-being. Traditionally researchers used H statistics to measure self-complexity. The theoretical construct of self-complexity and Linville's (1987) hypothesis should also be considered before making assumptions about the association between self-complexity and well-being. Whether the individual is satisfied with their self-aspect is more prominent than how many self- aspects they have. To put it another way, having a vast number of self-aspects that an individual is unwilling to have can negatively affect their total self-representation. For this reason, it can be a burden for the individual rather than a benefit. Also, the distinctiveness of self-aspects and the quality of features/traits that describe them may play a role in the person's well-being. Not to mention, the effect of positive and negative traits can affect self-judgment differently. Correspondingly, the buffering effect of self-complexity would be influenced by these differences. In addition, if a person is satisfied with their relatively low numbers of self, there may be no need to create a new one. However, the above findings suggest that when people have more than one self-aspect, these self-aspects may become a cognitive alternative in case of potential damage to core self-aspect.

All things considered, self-complexity can be advantageous and disadvantageous for certain situations. More studies needed to establish the role of self-complexity on well-being. Test of self-complexity across different samples (i.e., adults, students) and different conditions (i.e., education, work, and close relationships) will help to establish the function of self-complexity on well-being. One way to establish the short term and long term effects of high vs low self-complexity may be employing longitudinal studies.

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Özet

Linville, insanların kendilerine ilişkin farklı temsillere sahip olduğunu öne sürerek, kendileriyle ilgili farklı roller, etkinlikler ve davranışlardan oluşan çeşitli benlik yönlerini zihinsel olarak organize ettiğini belirtmiştir. İnsanların çeşitli benlikleri birbirinden farklıysa, benliğin bir yönüne yönelik tehditler veya olumsuz olaylar diğerlerini etkilemeyebilir. Benlik karmaşıklığı, birbiriyle örtüşmeyen çeşitli rollere, ilişkilere, bağlamlara veya etkinliklere karşılık gelen benliğin temsillerinin sayısı olarak tanımlanır. Benlik karmaşık ve farklı bilişsel organizasyonlarda temsil edilirse, stres tehdidi altında bireyin daha iyi işlev görmesini sağlayabilir, stresin fiziksel ve psikolojik sonuçlar üzerindeki sağlıksız sonuçlarını hafifletebilir. Bununla birlikte, benliğin bazı yönleri birbiriyle yakından ilişkiliyse, bir benlik yönü hakkındaki düşünce ve duyguların diğerine yayılma olasılığı daha yüksektir. Linville'e göre, benlik karmaşıklığı düşük olan bireyler, benlik karmaşıklığı yüksek olanlara göre, olumsuz yaşam olaylarından daha çok etkilenirler ve stres sonrasında fiziksel ve psikolojik sorunlar yaşama ihtimalleri daha yüksek olur. Benlik karmaşıklığı yüksek olduğunda, bireyler stresin olumsuz etkilerine karşı daha dirençli olmakta; benliğin bir yönünde yaşanan stres diğer yönleri etkilememektedir. Benlik karmaşıklığı özellikle yüksek stres altında daha avantajlıdır.

Linville'in benlik karmaşıklığı modeli farklı araştırmalarla desteklenmiştir. Yüksek benlik karmaşıklığının engellenme karşısında daha fazla dayanıklılıkla olumlu yönde ve romantik ilişkinin sona ermesinde deneyimlenen üzüntüyle olumsuz yönde ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Benzer şekilde, olumsuz bir olayın, yüksek benlik karmaşıklığına sahip kişilerin sonraki performanslarında iyileşmelere yol açarken, düşük benlik karmaşıklığına

sahip kişilerin performansında bozulmaya yol açtığını ortaya koyulmuştur. Bir başka araştırmada ise benlik karmaşıklığının, stres sonrasında depresyona karşı bir tampon işlevi gördüğünü, olumsuz olayların yıkıcı etkilerini azalttığını; ancak bu tampon etkisinin, olumlu yaşam olayları ve depresyon arasındaki ilişkide rol oynamadığını belirtmiştir. Alanyazında, benlik karmaşıklığının stres karşısındaki tampon etkisi hakkında tutarsız bulgular mevcuttur. Benlik karmaşıklığını inceleyen bir meta analiz çalışmasında benlik karmaşıklığının iyilik hali üzerindeki etkisinin ilişkinin net olmadığını ifade etmişlerdir. Yüksek benlik karmaşıklığının, farklı yükümlülükler getireceği ve bu yükümlülüklerin bireylerde düşük seviyede kronik olarak strese yol açabileceği ifade edilirken yüksek benlik karmaşıklığının depresyonla olumlu yönde ilişkili olduğunu gösterilmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, iyilik halinin, farklı benliklerin mutlak miktarı ve birbirinden bağımsız olmalarındansa bu özelliklerinin kalitesiyle ilişkili olduğunu belirtilmiştir. Buna karşın, benlik karmaşıklığının sadece yüksek stres durumlarında tampon işlevi gördüğünü ortaya koyan araştırmalar da mevcuttur. Bu nedenle, Linville'nin benlik karmaşıklığı modelinin sadece akut stres durumlarında geçerli olduğu düşünülmektedir. İnsanlar günlük hayatın getirdiği küçük stresler yaşarken, benlik karmaşıklığı bireylerin iyilik halini olumsuz etkileyebilir, farklı rollerin getirdiği gereklilikler bireyler için bir avantaj sağlamaktansa yük haline gelebilir.

Sosyal ve klinik psikoloji alanında yürütülen benlik karmaşıklığı araştırmaları birbiriyle tutarsız sonuçlara işaret ettiğinden, benlik karmaşıklığı araştırmalarında kullanılan yöntemin uygunluğu ve benlik karmaşıklığının doğru ölçülüp ölçülemediği sorgulanmaktadır. Geleneksel olarak, benlik karmaşıklığı bir kart gruplama işlemiyle ölçülmektedir. Katılımcılar, benlik kavramlarını temsil eden ve her grup için kendisiyle ilgili özelliklerini gösteren kartları seçer ve gruplar oluşturur. Aynı özellikleri farklı gruplar için kullanabilirler. Araştırmacılar, kart türlerinin içeriğini anlamlı istatistiklere çevirmek için H istatistiklerini kullanmış, yüksek H'nin yüksek benlik karmaşıklığını, düşük H'nin ise hem sayı hem de ilişkilik derecesi ile ilgili olarak düşük benlik karmaşıklığını yansıttığını varsaymışlardır. Bazı araştırmacılara göre bu ölçümlerde çeşitli eksikler/hatalar bulunmaktadır.

Bu araştırmacılar H ölçümünün, benlik karmaşıklığını oluşturan temel mekanizmaları (bireyin sahip olduğu benlik özelliklerinin sayısı ve bu yönler arasındaki ayırt edicilik/örtüşme derecesi) dikkate almadığını iddia etmiştir. Araştırmacılar, benlik karmaşıklığının stres üzerindeki tampon etkisinde, farklı benliklerin sayısının değil, bu benliklerin örtüşme derecesinin etkili olduğunu belirterek, bu örtüşmenin verimli bir şekilde ölçülmediği araştırmaların benlik karmaşıklığının etkisi hakkında zayıf sonuçlar verdiğine dikkat çekmişlerdir. Ayrıca araştırmacılar, H istatistiklerinin olumlu özellikleri olumsuz özelliklere göre daha çok vurguladığını öne sürerek iç tutarlılık katsayısının düşük olduğuna dikkat çekmişlerdir. Bu ölçüm, olumsuz benlik yönleri olan insanları belirlemede başarısız olabileceğinden, bireylerin benliğini doğru bir şekilde yansıtmayabilir.

Alanyazında benlik karmaşıklığının işlevi hakkında alanyazında tutarsız bulgular bulunmaktadır. Bazı araştırmalar, benlik karmaşıklığının stresle ilişkili fiziksel ve zihinsel hastalıklar, psikosomatik belirtiler ve depresyonda strese karşı bir tampon vazifesi gördüğünün ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, benlik karmaşıklığı yüksek olan bireyler, hüsrana ve başarısızlığa daha iyi dayanabilir, olumsuz olaylarla daha iyi baş edebilirler. Bununla birlikte, benlik karmaşıklığı ile iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkinin net olmadığını gösteren başka çalışmalar da vardır. Araştırmalar, benlik karmaşıklığı ile iyilik hali arasında negatif bir ilişki olabileceğini ve benlik karmaşıklığının, diğer çalışmaların önerdiği gibi daha iyi sağlık sonuçlarıyla doğrudan ilişkili olmadığını ve benlik karmaşıklığın avantajlı etkisinin yalnızca yüksek stresli koşullar altında görüldüğünü göstermiştir.

Benlik karmaşıklığın iyilik hali üzerindeki etkinliğini belirlemek için daha doğru ölçüm araçlarına ihtiyaç vardır. Bireyin benlik karmaşıklığından memnun olup olmadığı, sahip olduğu benlik yönlerinin sayısından daha önemlidir. Ayrıca, benlik özelliklerinin ayırt

ediciliği ve onları tanımlayan özelliklerin kalitesi kişinin iyi oluşunda rol oynayabilir. Diğer taraftan, kişi nispeten düşük benlik sayısından memnunsa, yeni bir tane yaratmaya gerek olmayabilir. Bununla birlikte, yukarıdaki bulgular, insanların birden fazla benlik boyutuna sahip olduklarında, bu benlik boyutlarının, temel benlikte hasar olması durumunda bilişsel bir alternatif haline gelebileceğini düşündürmektedir.

Tüm bunlar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, benlik karmaşıklığının iyilik hali üzerindeki rolünü belirlemek için daha fazla çalışmaya ihtiyaç vardır. Yüksek ve düşük benlik karmaşıklığının uzun vadeli etkilerini belirlemenin bir yolu, farklı örneklemler (yani yetişkinler, öğrenciler) ve farklı koşullar (yani eğitim, iş ve yakın ilişkiler) arasında boylamsal çalışmalar yapmak olabilir.