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Escapism: suppression of self or its expansion?

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Abstract:

Until recently, escapism was generally seen as a negative phenomenon, due to its common conceptualization as an escape from reality; however, with the new model a more positive approach, distinguishing between self-suppression and self-expansion, began. In our study, we looked into the mechanisms underlying both components of escapism, where a sample of 147 students individually chose their escapist activity. Building on the two-dimensional conceptualization of escapism, we assumed that self-suppression would be associated with higher levels of self-alienation, while escapism as self-expansion would be related to higher levels of dispositional mindfulness and indirectly to a tendency to achieve flow. Results confirmed that self-suppression escapism and self-alienation share a positive correlation, with later also being a significant predictor of self-suppression escapism. However, contrary to our prediction, self-expansion escapism is not associated with dispositional mindfulness, nor does it represent a significant moderator in the relationship between self-expansion and flow. This study has extended the current understanding of escapist activities' complex nature in relation to psychological factors. Moreover, we contributed to the currently still sparse knowledge of escapism, and shed light on its positive side, which certainly exists, since escapism can lead not only to suppression of self but also to its enrichment and expansion.

Key words:

escapism, self-suppression, self-expansion, mindfulness, alienation

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Escapism: suppression of self or its expansion?

Escapism is a phenomenon known to sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers, as well as to artists, given its appearance in literature, the visual arts, and the film industry. Broadly defined, escapism can be seen as an escape from the real world.¹

In psychological research, this term is used to describe emotion-focused coping with stress, resulting from neglected external stressors responsible for stress², or threatening our identity and sense of control.³ Cohen and Taylor define escapism as an interruption of the routines and monotony of daily life.⁴ Longeway describes escapist behaviour as a sort of defensive mechanism, whose primary purpose is to deter negative, unwanted thoughts or emotions e.g., guilt, anxiety, powerlessness or any other state idiosyncratically causing discomfort.⁵ In general, escapism involves certain activities in which people engage to prevent critical self-evaluation,^{6,7} reduce negative affect⁸ and withdraw from routine daily demands.^{9,10}

Empirical investigations have shown that escapism has justifiably acquired some negative connotations. After reviewing the literature on self-destructive behaviour in the non-clinical population, Baumeister and Scher¹¹ concluded that the main cause of self-destruction is an urgent need to avoid unpleasant emotion-

¹ Andrew Evans, *This virtual life. Escapism and simulation in our media world* (London, 2001) (hereinafter: Evans, *This virtual life*).

² Susan Folkman and Richard S. Lazarus, "If it changes it must be a process: A study of emotion and coping during three stages of a college examination", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 48 (1985), 150–170.

³ Andrew Kuo, Richard J. Lutz and Jacob L. Hiler, "Brave new world of Warcraft: A conceptual framework for active escapism", *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 33, No. 7 (2016), 498–506 (hereinafter: Kuo, Lutz and Hiler, "Brave new world of Warcraft").

⁴ Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, *Escape attempts: The theory and practice of resistance to everyday life* (London, 1992).

⁵ John L. Longeway, "The rationality of escapism and self-deception", *Behavior and Philosophy* 18, No. 2 (1990), 1–20 (hereinafter: Longeway, "The rationality of escapism and self-deception").

⁶ Roy F. Baumeister, "Suicide as escape from self", *Psychological Review* 97 (1990), 90–113 (hereinafter: Baumeister, "Suicide as escape from self").

⁷ Longeway, "The rationality of escapism and self-deception", 1–20.

⁸ Kuo, Lutz and Hiler, "Brave new world of Warcraft", 498–506.

⁹ Jeffrey J. Froh, Todd B. Kashdan, Charles Yurkewicz, Jinyan Fan, Jennifer Allen and Jessica Glowacki, "The benefits of passion and absorption in activities: Engaged living in adolescents and its role in psychological well-being", *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 5, No. 4 (2010), 311–332.

¹⁰ Frode Stenseng and Joshua M. Phelps, "Passion for a Sport Activity, escapism, and affective outcomes: Exploring a mediation model", *Scandinavian Psychologist* 3 (2016), 1–15, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15714/scandpsychol.3.e2> (hereinafter: Stenseng and Phelps, "Passion for a Sport Activity, escapism, and affective outcomes").

¹¹ Roy F. Baumeister and Steven J. Scher, "Self-defeating behavior patterns among normal individuals: Review and analysis of common self-destructive tendencies", *Psychological Bulletin* 104, No. 1 (1988), 3–22.

al states and being acutely aware of self as inadequate, incompetent, unattractive, or guilty. Baumeister also hypothesised that suicidal tendencies, eating disorders, and drug abuse arise from an escalating desire to escape awareness of problems and disturbing insights about ourselves.^{12,13} Numerous studies addressing pathological gambling showed that gambling leads to escapism and dissociation from unpleasant emotions, which represent the main reason why individuals persist in gambling behaviour, even though they are well aware that it will not resolve their problems.¹⁴ The escapist engagement was also recognized by studies on sports activities in leisure time, where activities focused on health promotion were used to reduce self-awareness and to induce relief from personal problems.^{15,16} The similar motivation for avoiding reality was also found in people who immerse themselves in their favourite TV show or historical reenactments.¹⁷ Growing research concerning gaming (i.e., playing computer video games) has assigned a significant part to escapism in explaining why people play video games.^{18,19} Recent studies conducted on players of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG), showed that escapism is an important motivator for playing and even a strong predictor of some negative states such as psychological distress, lower life satisfaction and symptoms of internet addiction.²⁰ These findings indicate that the concept of escapism refers mainly to negative escapism. Given this conclusion, some authors see that escapism should be primarily understood in terms of escape from negative aspects of real life or as avoidant behaviour.²¹

¹² Baumeister, "Suicide as escape from self", 90–113.

¹³ Roy F. Baumeister, *Escaping the self: Alcoholism, spirituality, masochism, and other flights from the burden of selfhood* (New York, 1991) (hereinafter: Baumeister, *Escaping the self*).

¹⁴ e.g. Rory C. Reid, Desiree S. Li, Jean Lopez, Michael Collard, Iman Parhami, Reef Karim and Timothy Fong, "Exploring facets of personality and escapism in pathological gamblers", *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions* 11, No. 1 (2011), 60–74.

¹⁵ Susan L. Hutchinson, Chery K. Baldwin and Sae-Sook Oh, "Adolescent coping: Exploring adolescents' leisure-based responses to stress", *Leisure Sciences* 28 (2006), 115–131 (hereinafter: Hutchinson, Baldwin and Oh, "Adolescent coping: Exploring adolescents' leisure-based responses to stress").

¹⁶ Robert J. Vallerand, "On passion for life activities: The dualistic model of passion", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 42 (2010), 97–193 (hereinafter: Vallerand, "On passion for life activities").

¹⁷ Sophia Moskalenko and Steven J. Heine, "Watching your troubles away: Television viewing as a stimulus for subjective self-awareness", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29 (2003), 76–85.

¹⁸ Lily S. Chen, Hill J. Tu and Edward S. T. Wang, "Personality traits and life satisfaction among online game players", *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 11, No. 2 (2008), 145–149.

¹⁹ Daniel Kardefelt-Winther, "The moderating role of psychosocial well-being on the relationship between escapism and excessive online gaming", *Computers in Human Behavior* 38 (2014), 68–74 (hereinafter: Kardefelt-Winther, "The moderating role of psychosocial well-being on the relationship between escapism and excessive online gaming").

²⁰ David Hagström and Viktor Kaldo, "Escapism among players of MMORPGs: Conceptual clarification, its relation to mental health factors, and development of a new measure", *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* 17, No. 1 (2014), 19–20.

²¹ Kardefelt-Winther, "The moderating role of psychosocial well-being on the relationship between escapism and excessive online gaming", 68–74.

What these behaviours labelled as negative escapism have in common is enhanced attention towards activity and reduced self-awareness. Interestingly, these characteristics are also one of the main components of an optimal psychological experience, called flow.²² It seems we can contradictorily encounter escape from the self in self-destructive behaviour^{23,24}, as well as in activities that contribute to optimal psychological functioning.²⁵ By exploring escapism in a virtual world, Evans reached a comparable conclusion, explaining that escapist behaviour emerges from a need not just to relieve stress and interrupt daily routines, but to seek pleasure and conjure up fantasies as well.²⁶ Thus, escapism per se cannot be considered negative or positive but should instead be assessed within the context in which the behaviour takes place.

The new model of escapism

A study conducted by Stenseng, Rise, and Kraft used this paradox as a starting point and proposed a dualistic model of escapism, which offers a new way of looking at this phenomenon.²⁷ They claim that all escapist activities (from sports, games, and art, to more dangerous activities) in a similar manner provide us with opportunities to experience "action attention", a specific state that consists of three processes: task absorption, temporary dissociation, and reduced self-evaluation. Attention is considered as the central component in activity engagement and is characteristic of both healthy and less healthy escapist behaviour. This cognitive experience can, therefore, be accompanied by cognitive narrowing, as described by Baumeister,²⁸ but can also lead to optimal experiences in activity engagement, presented in the Flow model.²⁹ Understanding the duality of the experience provided by attention was transferred into the framework of a Regulatory focus theory – RFT,³⁰ which distinguishes between

²² Mihaly Csikszentmihályi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience* (New York, 1990) (hereinafter: Csikszentmihályi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*).

²³ Baumeister, "Suicide as escape from self", 90–113.

²⁴ Baumeister, *Escaping the self*.

²⁵ Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being", *American Psychologist* 55 (2000), 68–78.

²⁶ Evans, *This virtual life*.

²⁷ Frode Stenseng, Jostein Rise and Pål Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self: The role of self-suppression and self-expansion", *Leisure Sciences* 34, No. 1 (2012), 19–38 (hereinafter: Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self").

²⁸ Baumeister, "Suicide as escape from self", 90–113.

²⁹ Csikszentmihályi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*.

³⁰ Tory E. Higgins, "Promotion and prevention: regulatory focus as a motivational principle", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 30 (1998), 1–46.

two types of motivation: promotion focus and prevention focus. Promotion focus directs an individual to achieve higher standards and ideals, to nurture the self, and stay focused on positive outcomes. Prevention focus, on the other hand, guides an individual to gain congruence between their acts and perceived demands or obligations. Activity engagement, based on prevention focus, directs attention to the inhibition of negative outcomes, related to potential failure in achieving goals, and also to avoidance of negative evaluations from others; therefore, this motivation is to protect the self from threats of inconsistency and instability. According to Higgins's RFT theory, Stenseng and his colleagues³¹ suggested that individuals, when motivated to engage in escapist activities, have distinct self-regulatory views. While some use attention to achieve positive experiences more quickly, others engage in activities to prevent rumination over past negative experiences or challenges in the future. In both cases, the main goal is the same: to improve and increase one's well-being. However, motivation to enter this state originates from different mindsets. Individuals with promotion focus orientation engage in activities to achieve positive affect, whereas prevention focus oriented individuals use activities to achieve the absence of a negative affect. Given those differences, Stenseng et al. propose two main principles in engaging escapist activities, named self-expansion and self-suppression.³²

Distinguishing between the two aspects of escapism was empirically tested with exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis,³³ which confirmed that the concepts are differently related to some other measures. Stenseng and colleagues found that the two measures of escapism are independent of gender, time invested in escapist activity, and duration of activity. Moreover, results of a longitudinal study show that, over time, one form of escapism becomes predominant.

Self-suppression and self-expansion

If we try to describe self-suppression through the processes which define attention, we can conclude that this type of activity engagement mostly emerges from the need to reduce self-awareness due to unpleasant emotions, thoughts, events, or the state of the individual. Based on Duval and Wicklund's theory of objective self-awareness,³⁴ a critical self-evaluation is made when we focus on

³¹ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Shelley Duval and Robert A. Wicklund, *A theory of objective self-awareness* (New York, 1972).

self, comparing our real and ideal image of self. If a major discrepancy is perceived, strong negative emotions can be provoked, which we seek to reduce as soon as possible.

The effects of negative affect on escapist behaviour were empirically studied in a three-month longitudinal study,³⁵ which showed that a general negative affect amplifies the motives for self-suppression, while it has no effect on self-expansion.

For individuals participating in this kind of escapism, lower levels of self-control and self-regulation³⁶, emotion suppression³⁷, and less constructive coping with stress³⁸ were found, where avoidance and a wish for withdrawal dominate. In this state, escapist activity is seen as an instrument for avoiding negative aspects and temporarily deflecting their attention away from current stressors, painful memories, or future obstacles. Simultaneously, the possibility of increasing positive affect is also reduced. In other words, a self-suppressive manner of activity engagement hinders the experience of self-reinforcing and satisfying positive affect, following activities that are known to contribute to higher life satisfaction.

All this indicates that the self-suppression dimension is a part of a wider psychological spectrum, related to maladjusted behaviour. The motivation behind cognitive narrowing, compartmentalization, or deconstructive awareness can be seen as an effort towards alienation from disturbing parts of the self. Examining different states in the context of suppressing emotions, perceived self-discrepancies, and a need to withdraw and avoid stressful situations, we suggest that self-suppression escapism can be explained through the concept of alienation or self-alienation. Self-alienation can be defined as a measure of maladjustment and discontent or as part of a central aspect of personality.³⁹

Kalekin-Fishman describes alienation as being aware of a disparity between the things we want to do and the things we feel confident about and able to do.⁴⁰ In his theory, Maddi regarded alienation as a result of existential anxiety, arising

³⁵ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ James J. Gross, "Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences", *Psychophysiology* 39 (2002), 281–291 (hereinafter: Gross, "Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences").

³⁸ Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman, *Stress, appraisal, and coping* (New York, 1984).

³⁹ Deborah A. O'Donnell, Mary E. Schwab-Stone and Vladislav Ruchkin, "The mediating role of alienation in the development of maladjustment in youth exposed to community violence" *Development and Psychopathology* 18, No. 1 (2006), 215–232 (hereinafter: O'Donnell, Schwab-Stone and Ruchkin, "The mediating role of alienation in the development of maladjustment in youth exposed to community violence").

⁴⁰ Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, "Tracing the growth of alienation: Enculturation, socialization, and schooling in a democracy", *Contributions in Sociology* 116 (1996), 95–106.

in relation to self in four different subdimensions: powerlessness, adventurousness, nihilism, and vegetativeness. In this state, a person is uninvolved rather than committed, powerless rather than in control, and feels threatened by the future rather than challenged. Feelings of alienation thus inhibit exploratory behaviour, the search for new experiences, and the capacity to surrender to them lightheartedly.⁴¹

Alienation has been empirically identified in various contexts and behaviours such as sexual promiscuity, violence, vandalism, absenteeism, deviant behaviour, drug abuse, and alcoholism.^{42,43} Our assumption is that alienation can also be expressed through escapist behaviour: i.e., we assumed that individuals who use activities instrumentally to reduce negative affect in a self-suppressive manner are more alienated. Thus, we formed the following hypothesis:

H1: Individuals who score higher on the self-alienation show a higher level of self-suppression escapism when engaging in the chosen escapist activity.

The term self-expansion was previously used by other authors in the context of interpersonal closeness,⁴⁴ but in the present model of escapism, self-expansion stands for an extension of individual self, which becomes more complex and enriched by positive experiences, deriving from promotion in the escapist activity.⁴⁵ Some authors have recognized leisure activities as an important source of personal growth and as therefore providing a context for the discovery of new potentials and interests.⁴⁶ We could argue that for individuals who use escapism in this way, engaging in activity emerges from the wish to perform the activity itself, which results in stronger activity absorption. Preliminary studies showed that if we adopt performance and mastery goals regarding an activity, immersion in an activity (i.e., task absorption) plays an important mediator of intrinsic motivation, as it enables us to fully dedicate ourselves cognitively to it;⁴⁷ therefore, we can much more easily gain the skills required to perform the activities. This kind of cognitive immersion in activity

⁴¹ Salvatore R. Maddi, Suzanne C. Kobasa and Marlin Hoover, "An alienation test", *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 19, No. 4 (1979), 73–76 (hereinafter: Maddi, Kobasa and Hoover, "An alienation test").

⁴² Monica R. Brown, Kyle Higgins and Kim Paulsen, "Adolescent Alienation: What Is it and what can educators do about it?", *Intervention in School and Clinic* 39, No. 1 (2003), 3–9.

⁴³ Michael D. Slater, Kimberly Henry, Randall C. Swaim and Joe M. Cardador, "Vulnerable teens, vulnerable times: How Sensation seeking, alienation, and victimization moderate the violent media content aggressiveness relation", *Communication Research* 31 (2004), 642–668.

⁴⁴ Arthur Aron, Elaine N. Aron, Michael Tudor and Greg Nelson, "Close relationships as including other in the self", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60 (1991), 241–253.

⁴⁵ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁴⁶ e.g. Susan Hutchinson and Douglas A. Kleiber, "Gifts of the ordinary: Casual leisure's contribution to health and well-being", *World Leisure Journal* 47 (2005), 2–16.

⁴⁷ e.g. François Curry, Andrew C. Elliott, Philippe Sarrazin, David D. Fonseca and Marcel Rufo, "The trichotomous achievement goal model and intrinsic motivation: A sequential mediational model", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 38 (2002), 473–481.

can lead to losing track of time, also known as "nowness", which, according to reports, always induces a satisfying experience.

Lately, within the context of and in relation to emotional regulation and coping with stress, a concept named mindfulness has been drawing much attention. Mindfulness, as a strategy for coping, aims to change individual's attitude to stressful thoughts and events by lowering emotional reactivity and promoting cognitive appraisal.⁴⁸ One other characteristic of mindfulness refers to attention maintenance in a specific way, i.e., on purpose, focused on current experience and with a non-judgemental attitude.⁴⁹ Interestingly, similar traits can also be attributed to individuals who are engaging in escapist activities focused on promotion, who stay in the moment and have a better acceptance of the situation and of themselves. These individuals perceive escapist activities as a chance for self-development, offering an experience complementary to other significant life events,⁵⁰ which is also characteristic of mindful individuals who are open and receptive to all experience.⁵¹

A study showed that individuals who engage in activities in a self-expansion manner estimate that these activities induce a positive affect in them.⁵² Furthermore, in a more holistic sense, such activities also contribute to the nurture of self and provide more overall satisfaction with life. Comparably, other research has confirmed that dispositional and state mindfulness predict self-regulated behaviour and more positive emotional states, contributing to the enhancement of well-being.⁵³ Based on these findings, we predicted following hypothesis:

H2: Individuals showing higher dispositional mindfulness practice self-expansion escapist behaviour more often than individuals with lower mindfulness.

The dualistic model of escapism shows that the two dimensions of escapism relate differently to other psychological constructs and follow distinct motivation. In this model, the authors also included flow, the state of optimal psychological experience we mentioned earlier in relation to positive outcomes of activity engagement. The state of flow can be described as complete

⁴⁸ Bassam Khoury, Manoj Sharma, Sarah E. Rush and Claude Fournier, "Mindfulness-based stress reduction for healthy individuals: A meta-analysis", *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 78 (2015), 519–528.

⁴⁹ Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life* (New York, 1994).

⁵⁰ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁵¹ Kirk W. Brown and Richard M. Ryan, "The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84 (2003), 822–848 (hereinafter: Brown and Ryan, "The benefits of being present").

⁵² Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁵³ Brown and Ryan, "The benefits of being present", 822–848.

immersion in an activity, accompanied by high concentration, mastery, intrinsic motivation, pleasure, and many other positive aspects.⁵⁴ This experience is normally achieved when the requirements of tasks and our capabilities are balanced, or when the activity represents exactly the right amount of challenge.⁵⁵

Stenseng and colleagues have verified the role of flow in this model and found self-suppression to have a negative impact on the occurrence of flow, while self-expansion relates positively.⁵⁶ These results are consistent with the theory since flow and self-expansion share some characteristics, such as intrinsic motivation and attention, and both contribute to positive affect. Furthermore, their results showed that flow acts as a mediator of positive affect in this model, which follows from self-expansion escapism, while flow has no effect on the self-suppression dimension.

Csikszentmihályi argued that some individuals achieve flow much more easily than average people, because they possess the following characteristics: curiosity, persistence, low selfishness, and intrinsic motivation to engage in activities.⁵⁷ Such a person can also be described as someone who does things for their own sake and in relation to the present moment, instead of satisfying a later, more distant goal. In our case, we sought to examine the role of dispositional mindfulness in the relation between self-expansion and flow, where we proposed that mindfulness is present mostly in individuals involved in activities in a self-expansive manner.

Lately, research regarding the relationship between mindfulness and flow has been increasing, but many questions still remain unanswered. Various authors have empirically confirmed that mindfulness enhances the experience of flow on a sample of athletes.^{58,59} A hypothesis about mindfulness training positively contributing to experiencing the state of flow was also confirmed.⁶⁰

It seems that mindfulness by persisting in the present moment and by its unjudgemental and accepting awareness helps to establish the state of flow. Perhaps the flow represents mindfulness in action, which expresses itself when immersion in a certain activity is present. Given the identified correlation

⁵⁴ Csikszentmihályi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*.

⁵⁵ Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihályi, "The concept of flow", in: Snyder Charles R. and Lopez Shane J. (ed.) *Handbook of positive psychology* (New York, 2002), 89–105 (hereinafter: Nakamura and Csikszentmihályi, "The concept of flow").

⁵⁶ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁵⁷ Csikszentmihályi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*.

⁵⁸ Stuart Cathcart, Matt McGregor and Emma Groundwater, "Mindfulness and flow in elite athletes", *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology* 8, No. 2 (2014), 119–141.

⁵⁹ Ying H. Kee and John Wang, "Relationships between mindfulness, flow dispositions and mental skills adoption: A cluster analytic approach" *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 9 (2008), 393–411.

⁶⁰ Cian Aherne, Aidan P. Moran and Chris Lonsdale, "The effect of mindfulness training on athletes' flow: An Initial Investigation", *The Sport Psychologist* 25 (2011), 177–189.

between self-expansion and flow⁶¹, we predicted that mindfulness in this relation would play the role of moderator.

Based on this assumption, we formed the following hypotheses:

H3: Individuals showing high dispositional mindfulness are more prone to experience the state of flow.

H4: Dispositional mindfulness represents a moderating variable in the relation between self-expansion and flow.

Method

Participants

We tested our hypothesis on a sample of 147 participants, among whom 45 were males (30.6%) and 102 females (69.4%) with an average age of 22.50 ($SD = 1.81$). The sample consisted of students from various educational programs: 48.3% from social sciences, 25.9% from different professions, 10.2% from natural sciences, 9.5% from humanities, and 4.8% from formal sciences. Two participants did not report their academic field.

Measures

At the beginning of the questionnaire battery, participants were instructed to freely choose their dominant favourite escapist activity ("Choose and name your favorite activity and respond to the items with reference to this activity."). They also reported how much time they spent weekly on this activity and how many months or years they have been engaging in this activity.

Escapist activities represented a range of types, the most substantial part being the category of sports (28.6%), followed by watching movies and/or TV shows (15.0%), music engagement (13.6%), playing video/board games (11.6%), reading (3.4%) and other activities (6.8%). On average, participants spent 11,35 hours weekly on their escapist activity and had been engaging in the chosen activity for nine years.

We performed translation and back-translation of items for all instruments used with the exception of DFS-II, which was already used in other Slovenian studies. However, there has not yet been a proper validation of these questionnaires considering the different cultural and language background they were

⁶¹ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

generated from. To determine how well our data reflect the initially proposed structure of concepts, we carried out several exploratory and/ or confirmatory factor analyses.

The Escapism Scale⁶² consists of 11 items, arranged into two dimensions: self-expansion and self-suppression. The self-suppression dimension measures the degree to which individuals use escapist activity to suppress negative thoughts and emotions. In contrast, the self-expansion dimension captures individual's orientation towards the promotion of experiences and expansion of self. Each of the items refers to a favourite activity, which was chosen at the beginning of the questionnaire. The participant is supposed to keep the chosen activity in mind while answering the items (Item sample: "When I engage in my activity . . . I continuously try to learn new things about myself."). Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – do not agree, 7 – completely agree). Previous studies showed adequate internal consistency, similar to our sample, where Cronbach alpha was 0.83 for self-suppression and 0.84 for self-expansion, showing good internal consistency.

Next, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). When assessing model fit, several indices were used: Chi-square/df ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (*CFI*), Goodness-of-fit Index (*GFI*), as well as Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (*RMSEA*) and its *p*-value. Chi-square/df (χ^2/df) ratio value < 3 signifies good model fit,⁶³ while *CFI* and *GFI* values should be .90 or closer to 1 to indicate acceptable fit.⁶⁴ Generally, *RMSEA* value of < .08 with narrow confidence intervals is treated as an acceptable fit,⁶⁵ whereas its *p*-value, testing for closeness of fit in population, should be >.50.⁶⁶ Originally proposed two-factor structure model proved to be of poor fit ($\chi^2_{(43)} = 126.69$; *GFI* = .850; *CFI* = .870; *RMSEA* = .115 [.092, .139]). With detailed inspection of estimates and modification indices we respecified our model by adding a covariance between corresponding error terms which had overlapping content (e.g., "I try to suppress my problems" and "I shut out the difficult things I don't want to think about"). We also added specification of cross-loading with respect to item 7 ("I try to prevent negative thoughts about myself") on self-expansion factor. Ideally, items should clearly target only one of the underlying factors, however, standardized regression weights showed a double-loading effect, with target loading some-

⁶² Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁶³ Karl G. Jöreskog and Dag Sörbom, LISREL 8: User's reference guide (Chicago, 1996).

⁶⁴ Li-tze, Hu and Peter M. Bentler, "Cutoff criteria for fit indices in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives", Structural Equation Modeling 6 (1999), 1–55.

⁶⁵ Barbara M., Byrne, Structural equation modeling with AMOS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming (New York, 2016) (hereinafter: Byrne, Structural equation modeling with AMOS).

⁶⁶ Karl G. Jöreskog and Dag Sörbom, LISREL 8: User's reference guide (Chicago, 1996).

what higher (.561) than cross-loading (.335).

After two steps of changes to the model we attained final model, showing a better fit with our data ($\chi^2_{(40)} = 74.55, p = .001; \chi^2/df = 1.86; GFI = .92; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .077 [.049, .104]; p = .06$).

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)⁶⁷ consists of 15 items, measuring one-dimensional mindful attention and awareness, which represents a crucial feature of mindfulness. Participants answer by marking how often they experience a particular state on a 6-point Likert scale (1 – almost always, 6 – almost never). Previous studies showed this scale to have adequate internal consistency, ranging from 0.8 to 0.9, while on our sample Cronbach alpha was 0.87. Item sample: "I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later."

CFA of the originally proposed model with all items loading in a single latent factor showed a poor fit ($\chi^2_{(90)} = 220.304; \chi^2/df = 2.45, GFI = .823, CFI = .821; RMSEA = .100 [.083, .116], p = .000$). In order to control for possible source of misfit, we added some covariances between error terms that showed overlapping content (e.g. "I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present." and "I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing") and thus came up with final model, which showed a significant improvement ($\Delta\chi^2_{(4)} = 60.408, p < .000; \chi^2_{(86)} = 159.896; \chi^2/df = 1.859; GFI = .880; CFI = .900; RMSEA = .077 [.058, .095], p = .012$). With a lower value of chi-statistics and increased values of fit indices the respecified model showed a reasonable fit to our data.

Dispositional Flow Scale-2 (DFS-2)⁶⁸ is used to measure flow as a dispositional characteristic, i.e. tendency to achieve flow while engaging in an activity. This scale consists of 36 items, arranged into nine dimensions (originating from Csikszentmihályi's theoretical assumptions),⁶⁹ but it can be used as a one-dimensional measure as well, which was the case in our study. Participants completed this scale using a 5-point Likert scale (1 – never, 5 – always). In our case, we made some adjustments. We used the Slovenian translation,⁷⁰ and changed items to fit different activities. Item sample: "My attention is focused entirely on this activity." The Slovenian study showed good reliability of this

⁶⁷ Brown and Ryan, "The benefits of being present", 822–848.

⁶⁸ Susan A. Jackson and Robert C. Eklund, "Assessing flow in physical activity: The flow state scale-2 and Dispositional flow scale-2", *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* 24, No. 2 (2002), 133–150.

⁶⁹ Csikszentmihályi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*.

⁷⁰ Barbara Fritz Smolej and Andreja Avsec, "The Experience of flow and subjective well-being of music students", *Horizons of Psychology* 16, No. 2 (2007), 5–17.

scale; on our sample, Cronbach coefficients were $\chi = 0.85$ for transformation of time, $\chi = 0.73$ for challenge/skill balance, $\chi = 0.65$ for merging of action and awareness, $\chi = 0.76$ for clear goals, $\chi = 0.77$ for unambiguous feedback, $\chi = 0.70$ for concentration on task, $\chi = 0.73$ for sense of control, $\chi = 0.91$ for loss of self-consciousness and $\chi = 0.77$ for autotelic experience. Cronbach alpha was 0.92 for the whole scale, showing very good reliability.

Even though DFS-II has been used in many studies and across different samples some uncertainties regarding its structure are still present. For example, many authors fail to confirm the original nine-factor structure due to a large number of correlations and the presence of content overlapping among latent factors.^{71,72} Consequently, there are a multitude of competing models to be tested if our model does not fit the data.

At the beginning we tested the originally proposed nine-first-order factor structure and a single second-order factor structure but this theoretically designed version of the model did not show acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2_{(586)} = 1205.321$; $\chi^2/df = 2.06$; $GFI = .694$; $CFI = .754$; $RMSEA = .085$ [.078, .092], $p = .000$). Exploring possible sources of misfit, we added some changes to the model, which included eliminating two items and adding one variance and two additional covariances between error terms.

Based on chi-square difference tests we have shown that respecified model fits the data significantly better than previous models ($\chi^2_{(516)} = 897.357$; $\chi^2/df = 1.739$). However, this model could still be improved as suggested by the modification indices ($GFI = .740$; $CFI = .838$; $RMSEA = .071$ [.063, .079], $p = .000$) since it does not show an acceptable fit according to the especially low value of GFI and CFI , which should be at least .90.^{73,74} Other indices, on the other hand, such as $RMSEA$ value (lower than .08), the χ^2/df ratio (smaller than 3) and all items loading significantly on the latent variables, with coefficients ranging from .46 to .97 ($ps < .001$), show a close fit at least to some extent.

We also conducted the analysis for several other models, i.e. nine-first order factor, a single first order factor and seven-first order factor model designed by Procci et al.⁷⁵ but none of the alternative models displayed acceptable values, since they all fit our data worse than our respecified model. Another important

⁷¹ e.g. Katelyn Procci, Alysa R. Singer, Katherine R. Levy and Clint Bowers, "Measuring the flow experience of gamers: An evaluation of the DFS-2", *Computers in Human Behavior* 28, No. 6 (2012), 2306–2312 (hereinafter: Procci, Singer, Levy and Bowers, "Measuring the flow experience of gamers").

⁷² e.g. John Wang, Wen-Ching Liu and Angeline Khoo, "The psychometric properties of dispositional flow scale-2 in internet gaming", *Current Psychology* 28, No. 3 (2009), 194–201.

⁷³ Byrne, *Structural equation modeling with AMOS*.

⁷⁴ Roderick P. McDonald and Moon-Ho R. Ho "Principles and practice in reporting structural equation analyses", *Psychological methods* 7, No. 1 (2002), 64–82.

⁷⁵ Procci, Singer, Levy and Bowers, "Measuring the flow experience of gamers", 2306–2312

aspect of this model is that the analyses of complex covariance structures usually base on large sample theory. Therefore large samples are critical for obtaining precise parameter estimates. Given the commonly used rules of thumb for determining adequate N , i.e., the ratio between N and the number of model parameters (q), $N/q \geq 5$, our sample does not meet the required criterion ($N = 147$, $q = 79$). We could, therefore, assume that the sample size also had some impact on parameter estimation.

The Alienation Test⁷⁶ consists of 60 items, distributed into four dimensions: powerlessness, adventurousness, nihilism, and vegetativeness, which are measured in relation to five different contexts: work, social institutions, family, other persons and relation to self. Authors claim this questionnaire can serve as a one-dimensional measure of general alienation, as well. In our case, we only used items measuring alienation in relation to self or self-alienation, which reduces the length of the questionnaire to 12 items. While the original version of this test uses a 0 to 100 answering format, we used a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly agree, 7 – strongly disagree). The reliability of this test proved to range from 0.72 to 0.95, Cronbach alpha for all dimensions on our sample was 0.82. Item sample: "The most exciting thing for me is my own fantasies."

Concerning the validity of this questionnaire the CFA showed that four-factor model fits our data poorly, given the strong inter-factor correlations. By testing a single factor model, where all items load on one general factor, a better fit was found ($\chi^2_{(54)} = 111.401$; $\chi^2/df = 2.063$; $GFI = .885$; $CFI = .855$; $RMSEA = .085$ [.063, 0.108], $p = .007$). Moreover, by adding a single covariance between error terms, this fit increased and showed acceptable values ($\chi^2_{(53)} = 92.088$; $\chi^2/df = 1.738$; $GFI = .904$; $CFI = .901$; $RMSEA = .071$ [.049, .095], $p = .080$), therefore we can confirm to have a reasonably well fit between the model and the data.

Procedure

The questionnaire battery was arranged and made available in an online form, using an online application, and sent to participants via a range of social networks, email, and websites. Some participants were recruited by snowball sampling. All participants were guaranteed anonymity. Completing the questionnaires was not time-limited and was completely voluntary; on average, it took participants 12 minutes to complete the whole battery. This survey was available online for a month and a half and was deactivated when we began the analysis.

⁷⁶ Maddi, Kobasa and Hoover, "An alienation test", 73–76.

Analysis

In our preliminary analyses, we examined the validity and reliability of used measures by running exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and by calculation of internal consistency coefficients for each dimension.

Our hypotheses were first tested by calculating Pearson correlation coefficients, while the significance of the proposed simple regression model was tested using linear regression. Furthermore, we tested whether one of the constructs had the role of moderator; in other words, we checked whether there was a significant interaction effect between the proposed moderator and the predictor. Moderated multiple regression was conducted using the Process function,⁷⁷ which offers several advantages, e.g. it automatically creates an interaction product of predictors, performs centring of data and also implements regression analysis for predictor and outcome with different values of the moderator (i.e., simple slope analysis).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, minimums, and maximums for each variable along with kurtosis and skewness.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for all studied variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Self-suppression	24.10	8.23	6	42	-0.08	-0.24
Self-expansion	24.96	6.20	8	35	-0.61	-0.06
Self-alienation	33.76	11.41	12	70	0.68	0.38
DFS-2	141.33	17.79	94	180	-0.23	-0.01
MAAS	57.11	11.61	21	83	-0.25	0.08

Notes: DFS-2 = Dispositional flow scale-2; MAAS = Mindful attention awareness scale; $SE_{skewness} = 0.20$; $SE_{kurtosis} = 0.40$

⁷⁷ Kristopher J. Preacher and Andrew F. Hayes, "SPSS and SAS Procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models", *Behavior Research Methods Instruments & Computers* 36, No. 4 (2004), 717-731.

Below we present additional descriptive statistics related to the escapist activity chosen by participants and corresponding to "my favourite activity". We categorized these into eight arbitrarily determined categories and added Other, where we put some of the more unique activities. *Table 2* shows the frequencies of the chosen activities arranged by gender. We also presented data about how long the participants had been engaging in their chosen activity and how much time they spent on it per week.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for selected escapist activities based on gender, hours and years engaged in activity

	N	Gender		Time spent			$M_{(time\ devoted)}$
		male	female	M	Min	Max	
Sports	42 (28.6)	13 (28.9)	29 (28.4)	7.02	1	24	7.71
Watching TV shows/movies	22 (15.0)	3 (6.7)	19 (18.6)	12.36	5	27	7.23
Music	20 (13.6)	9 (20.0)	11 (10.8)	11.45	1	36	11.00
Video games	17 (11.6)	11 (24.4)	6 (5.9)	18.88	4	70	10.88
Reading	14 (9.5)	1 (2.2)	13 (12.7)	11.00	2	30	13.79
Creative activities	10 (6.8)	2 (4.4)	8 (7.8)	11.50	2	40	5.55
Walking	7 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	7 (6.9)	9.29	2	28	11.50
Dancing	5 (3.4)	1 (2.2)	4 (3.9)	6.80	4	12	7.80
Other	10 (6.8)	5 (11.1)	5 (4.9)				

Notes: Parentheses contain percentages. Time spent = how many hours per week dedicated to this activity; $M_{(time\ devoted)}$ = how many years engaged in this activity. The remaining part of activities were classified under category Other

Table 2 shows that on average, participants engage mostly in activities that can be categorized as sports, where males and females chose this activity in nearly the same percentages. The second most-often chosen escapist activity was watching TV shows/movies, which was chosen in mostly by women. Besides sports, the second most often chosen activity by men was playing video-games. Among all activities, participants spent most time weekly at playing video-games, which also has the greatest maximum, while participants who chose sports and music engagement spent the least time weekly doing these activities. Measured in years, participants who chose reading as their escapist activity has been engaging in it for the longest time.

Table 3: Pearson correlation coefficients between variables and reliability of measures

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-suppression	(.83)				
2. Self-expansion	.01	(.84)			
3. Self-alienation	.35 ^{**}	-.11	(.82)		
4. DFS-2	-.04	.36 ^{**}	-.20 [*]	(.92)	
5. MAAS	-.33 ^{**}	.08	-.40 ^{**}	.29 ^{**}	(.87)

Notes: DFS-2 = Dispositional flow scale-2; MAAS = Mindful attention awareness scale; N = 147; Cronbach χ coefficients are shown in parentheses

^{*} $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$

Pearson correlation coefficients, shown in *Table 3*, reveal that most constructs are related in the expected manner. The relation between mindfulness and flow is positive and moderate. Self-alienation is negatively related to all measured variables, with the exception of self-suppression escapism. Some of the calculated coefficients are not statistically significant, which is true for the correlation between self-expansion and mindfulness, where the Pearson coefficient is slightly positive, but not significant, showing that these variables are mutually independent. Other significant correlations can be described as having low to moderate strength. The Cronbach alpha coefficients shown in parentheses reveal good reliability across all variables.

Self-suppression and self-alienation

From the correlation matrix in *Table 3*, we can notice that self-alienation and self-suppression escapism show a statistically significant positive correlation. In the next step, a linear regression model was used to examine the nature of this relationship, with self-alienation predicting self-suppression escapism. Results showed that self-alienation is an important predictor of self-suppression escapism ($B = 0.256$; $t(145) = 4.58$, $p < .000$). Self-alienation also explained a significant proportion of variance in self-suppression ($R^2 = 0.126$, $F(1, 145) = 20.95$, $p < .000$).

Self-expansion escapism, mindfulness and flow

The correlation coefficients between self-expansion escapism and flow show a significant moderate positive correlation, while a connection between this

kind of escapism and mindfulness was not identified in our sample. We also detected a moderate positive correlation between mindfulness and flow, which was important information for further analysis.

The potentially moderating effect of mindfulness, which was hypothesized in the relation between self-expansion escapism and flow, was tested by the Process function. In the first step, this function performs centering and creates an interaction product, which serves as a basis for analysis in the hypothesized regression model.

The basic results from the moderation analysis are shown in *Table 4*. Of particular relevance for us is the significance of the interaction product (Self-expansion x MAAS), as it shows if there is a moderating effect. Given that the *p*-values do not indicate a statistical significance; it can be concluded that in this case such an effect does not exist.

We did not proceed with a further detailed simple slope analysis, since the general moderation effect was not found.

Table 4. Results of moderated multiple regression analyses predicting flow from self-expansion, dispositional mindfulness (MAAS) and their interaction product

	<i>b</i>	95. CI	<i>SE B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	141.55	[138.94, 144.16]	1.32	107.21	.00
Self-expansion	1.05	[0.54, 1.55]	0.26	4.10	.00
MAAS	0.39	[0.54, 1.55]	0.12	3.15	.00
Self-expansion x MAAS	-0.04	[0.09, 0.01]	0.02	-1.62	.11

Notes: MAAS = Mindful attention awareness scale; 95. CI = 95. confidence interval; $R^2 = .22$ for step 1 ($p < .001$); $\Delta R^2 = .02$ for step 2 ($p = .11$)

Discussion

With this study, we sought to examine how escapism dimensions, i.e., self-suppression and self-expansion, are related to other concepts, such as self-alienation, mindfulness and flow. We wanted to know if self-alienation predicts self-suppression escapism and also wondered about the role of mindfulness in the positive outcomes present in self-expansion escapism.

At the beginning of the analysis, we performed a basic review of the escapist activities freely chosen by participants. With the option of free choice, we

tried to follow the theory proposed by other authors⁷⁸ who claim that activities do not belong to one or another kind of escapism per se but are defined based on a person's attitude towards them. As expected, the most frequently chosen activities were sport, watching TV, music engagement, and playing video-games, which are activities addressed in previous studies.^{79,80,81,82}

Next, we examined correlation coefficients to identify potential relations between measured constructs and found that there was no statistically significant correlation between self-expansion and self-suppression escapism as we had expected. Recent studies showed that both kinds of escapism are slightly positively correlated^{83,84}, but in our case, they remain independent and uncorrelated. Still, most of the measured constructs were correlated in the expected manner.

Given the distinct nature of both kinds of escapism, as examined in previous empirical studies, we tried to explore and examine some new mechanisms that represent the background of escapism. We hypothesised that there is an important relation between self-suppression and self-alienation, which was confirmed. Self-suppression escapism and self-alienation are positively related, meaning we can confirm our hypothesis (H1). People who score highly on self-alienation, engage in their activities mainly in a self-suppressive manner.

These findings are consistent with theoretical assumptions and previous longitudinal studies, where negative affect was shown to strengthen motives for self-suppression escapism. Regarding self-alienation, we can recognize different kinds of negative affect and dissatisfaction.⁸⁵ TenHouten explains that the basic emotion in state of alienation is despair, driven by unsatisfied needs, suppression and abandonment of true goals and desires;⁸⁶ or, as seen by Seeman, despair can be the result of a perceived discrepancy between the ideal and real self, of feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness and of emotional coping with stress.⁸⁷ In this state, a person wants to lower the awareness of these

⁷⁸ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁷⁹ Hutchinson, Baldwin and Oh, "Adolescent coping: Exploring adolescents' leisure-based responses to stress", 115–131.

⁸⁰ Kardefelt-Winther, "The moderating role of psychosocial well-being on the relationship between escapism and excessive online gaming", 68–74.

⁸¹ Stenseng and Phelps, "Passion for a Sport Activity, escapism, and affective outcomes", 1–15.

⁸² Vallerand, "On passion for life activities", 97–193.

⁸³ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁸⁴ Stenseng and Phelps, "Passion for a Sport Activity, escapism, and affective outcomes", 1–15.

⁸⁵ O'Donnell, Schwab-Stone and Ruchkin, "The mediating role of alienation in the development of maladjustment in youth exposed to community violence", 215–232.

⁸⁶ Warren D. TenHouten, *Alienation and affect* (London–New York, 2017).

⁸⁷ Melvin Seeman, "On the meaning of alienation", *American Sociological Review* 24, No. 6 (1959), 783–791.

unpleasant emotions and thoughts, which can be accomplished by engaging in escapist activities, which act as instruments allowing the person to create a safe distance from stressful situations, redirect their thoughts, lower emotional reactivity and minimize negative perceptions of self or perception of future obstacles.⁸⁸ It should be noted that self-alienation is merely one state leading a person to self-suppression escapism; potentially there are other predictors (for instance locus of control, anxiety, satisfaction with life, motivational mindset, self-regulative capacities, rumination) which should be examined in the future and additionally included in the model.

On the other hand, the level of self-alienation is independent of self-expansion escapism, as supported by theory to some extent. For example, Maddi and colleagues claim that alienation deters an individual from explorative behaviour, from seeking new life-enriching experiences and willingly giving in to them, which represents, so to speak, the core of self-expansion escapism.⁸⁹

By exploring the relationship between flow and self-suppression escapism, we found that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables, however, a correlation coefficient indicates a negative direction. A significant negative correlation was found between self-suppression escapism and mindfulness. Previous studies show that self-suppression escapism is negatively related to the emergence of flow⁹⁰ and also somehow blocks the occurrence of positive and negative affect, since prevention of one affect also hinders the experiencing of other positive, self-preservative, pleasant states⁹¹ which could contribute to a more psychologically optimal experience – which flow certainly is. Another explanation is that a person who engages in an activity with the goal of minimizing discomfort does not have a clear goal involving the activity itself; moreover, intrinsic motivation is absent, owing to the instrumental use of the activity. However, intrinsic motivation and clear goals are important characteristics of the flow state.⁹²

Next, we draw our attention to self-expansion escapism and its relation to other relevant concepts. Whereas with self-suppression we recognized motives that lead a person to the narrowing of self-awareness and the prevention of experiencing discomfort, we proposed a somehow converse mechanism with self-expansion escapism, which leads a person to engage in activities with the

⁸⁸ Douglas A. Kleiber, Susan L. Hutchinson and Richard Williams, "Leisure as a resource in transcending negative life events: Self-protection, self-restoration, and personal transformation", *Leisure Sciences* 24 (2002), 219–235.

⁸⁹ Maddi, Kobasa and Hoover, "An alienation test", 73–76.

⁹⁰ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁹¹ Gross, "Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences", 281–291.

⁹² John Kowal and Michelle S. Fortier, "Motivational determinants of flow: Contributions from self-determination theory", *Journal of Social Psychology* 139 (1999), 355–368.

intention of promoting already present wellbeing. Our assumptions were that people with this kind of mindset show greater dispositional mindfulness.

However, this assumption was not confirmed by the results, and consequently, we cannot confirm our hypothesis (*H3*). Mindfulness can be seen as one possible strategy for coping with stress and focusing on the present, but it covers a broader spectrum of characteristics. It may be that an important boundary between self-expansion and mindfulness is that the latter places great meaning in self-awareness, receptiveness and openness to experience in itself,⁹³ whereas an important feature of engaging in escapist activities is reduced self-awareness, which may be the main reason for the lack of correlation between them.

Authors of the dualistic model of escapism recognized several similarities between self-expansion and flow. Empirical testing confirmed this and placed flow into a model where it represents an outcome of but also acts as a mediator between self-expansion and positive affect.⁹⁴

Csikszentmihályi already emphasized that there are differences in the propensity for achieving flow, where some properties like intrinsic motivation, perseverance and curiosity are thought to be in the background.⁹⁵ Hence, we wondered whether dispositional mindfulness could explain differences in experiencing flow while engaging in escapist activities. Our assumptions were that mindfulness plays the role of a moderator in this model, where it affects the relationship between self-expansion and flow. We assumed that an individual is more inclined to experience flow while engaging in activity in a self-expansion way, if he/she also has a higher level of expressed dispositional mindfulness.

First, we anticipated a positive correlation between mindfulness and flow, which proved to be statistically significant. Results also showed an important positive correlation between flow and self-expansion escapism, while there was no significant correlation between mindfulness and self-expansion, meaning that the potential moderator and predictor are mutually independent. In the next step, we examined the proposed regression model, where flow acts as an outcome, predicted from self-expansion, dispositional mindfulness and their interaction product. Results demonstrated that the effect of the interaction variable (self-expansion x mindfulness) was not significant, which indicates that the relationship between self-expansion and flow is not moderated by mindfulness. We cannot draw any conclusion about a moderator effect or confirm our hypothesis (*H4*).

⁹³ Brown and Ryan, "The benefits of being present", 822–848.

⁹⁴ Stenseng, Rise and Kraft, "Activity engagement as escape from self", 19–38.

⁹⁵ Nakamura and Csikszentmihályi, "The concept of flow", 89–105.

Given the results, mindfulness does not have an important role in relation to self-expansion and flow, meaning that there may be other mechanisms that were not included in our model. In any case, it should be mentioned that there are no theories or models on which we can rely in these findings, since we used a relatively new conceptualization of escapism that has not yet been tested or given sufficient attention, and our study consequently represents one among the first in this field.

Conclusion and limitations

In this study, escapism was addressed in terms of the recently established dualistic model of escapism, which distinguishes between self-suppression and self-expansion dimensions. Previous studies have identified some correlations formed between these dimensions and other concepts, such as positive and negative affect, vulnerability to depression, self-control, flow, emotion suppression, and coping strategies. Our goal was to explore potential relations between escapism, self-alienation and mindfulness in conjunction with the tendency to achieve a flow state. Through this study, we have generally supported the model of escapism.

The primary practical goal of this research was to develop a better understanding of escapism with reference to the recently introduced model. Escapist activities seem to be on the rise, which calls for more research attention in this area. Escapism research would especially benefit from the attention of psychologists since it also concerns processes that differ individually, in addition to taking place at the social level. In this study, we also approached the background of escapism by examining the role of two somewhat opposite states – mindfulness and self-alienation. Our results confirmed that people who feel powerless and cultivate some sense of meaninglessness mainly engage in self-suppression escapism. Surprisingly, we can find cases where participants report engaging in 'healthy' activities like sports but still act in a self-suppressive manner. With this research, we strengthen the notion of dual nature of escapism and encourage others to ask themselves about the attitudes and feelings towards the involvement in the activities.

Along with self-suppression, future studies should further examine conditions for the development of self-expansion escapism. Apart from being instrumentally used, escapist activities can be seen as a form of breaking from stagnation, exploring the unknown, following the imagination, etc. It seems that in everyday life people often encounter demands to self-expand, for example, many employees at work are expected not only to adapt but also to evolve, transform and think outside of conventional manners, where features of self-

expansion escapism can be detected (i.e. learning new things about yourself, knowing yourself better, opening up for new experiences that could enrich life). It seems that learning about leisure activities and promoting more positive attitudes towards them could also be of use in working environments.

However, we should highlight some limitations that were present in our study, primarily linked to sample, measurements and the analysis used.

Our sample consisted of students from a range of social studies and natural science disciplines and of in various ages. Future studies however, should ensure greater variability in terms of gender, age and educational structure for the sake of greater generalizability.

All measurement instruments used in this study consisted of self-assessment scales, meaning that some potential assessment bias is already included. Furthermore, all questionnaires (except DFS-2) had not yet been validated on the Slovenian population; therefore, some items may be culturally weighted.

One of the disadvantages, which could also be seen as an advantage, is that participants could freely choose their favourite escapist activity and refer to this activity while answering the questionnaires. Previous studies have in fact, studied only specific groups of people who showed a particular escapist activity, which gives our findings a limited extent compared to a heterogeneous sample. The limitation arising from this is that some activities are less likely per se to result in a flow state, such as watching TV shows, listening to music and the like, compared to playing an instrument or engaging in sports, where one becomes more actively involved in performing the activity. It is also worth emphasizing that the activities chosen by participants were not equally represented, as was also expected. In the future, activities should be more evenly distributed, which would allow us to make separate analyses based on different activities and check for any significant differences that stem from the chosen type of escapist activity. Another thing that can be considered as a limitation are instructions inviting participants to picture their "favourite activity" in order to respond to items relating to suppression and expansion. As discussed earlier, escapist activities can range from passively watching TV series to active sports and can also take forms of unhealthy habits (e. g. using drugs, gambling). The latter are usually not regarded as favourite activities; therefore the term "favourite" should be avoided and replaced accordingly in order to capture the entire range of escapist activities.

Future research should examine the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for both kinds of escapism, and also consider how different personality aspects are related to escapism, e.g., openness to experience, fantasy-prone personality, amount of self-criticism, tendency to anxiety and a person's time perspective.

Barbara Sopčič in Bojan Musil

ESKAPIZEM: ODMIKANJE OD SEBSTVA ALI NJEGOVA RAZŠIRITEV?

POVZETEK

Soočanje z realnostjo ljudi mnogokrat potisne k želji, da bi se premaknili v neko drugo dimenzijo bivanja, kjer bi čas tekkel po njim ljubem ritmu, kjer se ni potrebno ukvarjati z normami, potrebami in pričakovanji drugih, materialnimi dobrinami in osebnimi hibami. Količina zadovoljstva, ki jo je moč v današnji stresni realnosti izluščiti, mnogim ni dovolj, zato težijo k iskanju pomožnih, dodatnih konstruktov, kot je eskapistična domišljija, ki bi jim omogočila začasni pobeg iz realnega sveta. Slednje današnja družba v veliki meri pozdravlja, saj lahko opazujemo celotne industrije, ki vznikajo kot nalašč za to, da bi spodbudile človekovo tendenco odmikanja od banalnosti vsakdana. Ljudje sicer eskapiramo že od nekdaj npr. skozi različne aktivnosti od branja knjig, gledanja filmov in športa ali preprosto z močjo našega uma, na drugi strani pa nedavne ocene kažejo, da bo kmalu že petina svetovnega prebivalstva preživela v digitalno ustvarjenih svetovih toliko časa, kot ga v celoti porabi za redno izobraževanje, kar kaže, da družba v postaja čedalje bolj eskapistična in eskapistično vedenje množično.

Eskapizem je bil sprva tretiran kot obrambno vedenje, s katerim lahko dosežemo zatopljenost v aktivnost, začasno disociacijo od realnega doživljanja (npr. neprijetnih čustev) in zmanjšano samoocenjevanje oz. samozavedanje. Fenomen eskapizma si je sprva upravičeno pridobil negativen prizvok, saj so raziskave pokazale, da se ta povezuje s samodestruktivnimi in samomorilnimi nagnjenji, motnjami hranjenja in patološkim hazarderstvom, katerim je prav tako skupna želja po pobegu od trenutne realnosti. Na drugi strani pa avtorji prav tako opozarjajo, da eskapistično doživljanje vsebuje tudi določene karakteristike optimalnega psihološkega zadovoljstva oz. zanosu. Prepoznano dvojnost pri razumevanju eskapizma so kasneje pojasnili z vpeljavo dualističnega modela eskapizma, s katerim lahko ločimo med eskapizmom kot odmikanjem od sebstva in eskapizmom kot razširjanjem sebstva. Avtorji modela pojasnjujejo, da je pri eskapističnih aktivnostih potrebno razumeti motivacijo za to vedenje, saj oseba lahko vstopa v eskapistično stanje iz želje po tem, da bi odstranila že prisoten negativen afekt oz. se samo-zaščitila ali z željo, da pospeši doseganje pozitivnega afekta oz. osebnostno rast.

Na podlagi dvodimenzionalnega modela eskapizma, ki zagovarja dualistični pristop in sloni na predpostavkah o tem, kakšno vlogo imajo osebne lastnosti, emocije in splošno blagostanje pri posameznikovi motivaciji za

udejstvovanje v eskapističnih dejavnostih, želimo v pričujoči študiji preučiti del eskapizma, vezanega na samozavedanje. Zanima nas, na kakšen način odnos posameznika do sebstva in zaznavanja samega sebe določa vrsto eskapizma oz. ali eskapistična dejavnost odraža odmikanje od sebstva ali njegovo razširitev. Zanima nas tudi, kako razlike v samozavedanju, ki se kažejo kot nagnjenost k čuječnosti ali samoodtujenosti, prispevajo k pojavu zanosu ob ukvarjanju z eskapistično dejavnostjo, in ali ima čuječnost v odnosu med eskapizmom kot razširitvijo sebstva in zanosom vlogo moderatorja. Hipoteze smo testirali na vzorcu 147 študentov različnih družboslovnih in naravoslovnih študijskih smeri, s povprečno starostjo 22,5 let, ki so s pomočjo spletne ankete odgovarjali na krajšo baterijo psiholoških vprašalnikov. Pri odgovarjanju so udeleženci uporabljali več-stopenjske Likertove lestvice, s katerimi so dimenzionalno ocenili svoje običajne navade in lastnosti.

Preliminarne analize so pokazale, da največji delež udeležencev med eskapistične aktivnosti šteje šport, temu sledi kategorija gledanje filmov/tv-serij, ukvarjanje z glasbo in igranje video/namiznih iger. V povprečju udeleženci tedensko za izbrano eskapistično aktivnost porabijo 11,35 ur, z izbrano aktivnostjo pa se v povprečju ukvarjajo že 9 let.

Za testiranje naših hipotez smo izvedli serijo korelacijskih analiz, kjer smo prediktorske odnose testirali z linearno regresijo, za preverjanje moderatorskega učinka pa smo izvedli moderacijsko multiplo regresijo pri čemer smo uporabili priključek Process. Rezultati so pokazali, da je samoodtujenost pozitivno povezana z eskapizmom kot odmikanjem od sebstva, izkazalo pa se je tudi, da je pomemben napovednik te vrste ekapizma, saj pojasnjuje pomemben delež variance v odmikanju od sebstva. Nadalje smo ugotovili, da čuječnost ni povezana z eskapizmom v obliki razširitve sebstva, medtem ko obstaja statistično signifikantna pozitivna povezava z zanosom. Eskapizem kot razširjanje sebstva in dispozicijska čuječnost neodvisno napovedujeta nastop zanosu v pozitivni smeri, nadaljnji rezultati moderatorske analize pa so pokazali, da čuječnost pri tem ne nastopi v vlogi moderatorja odnosa med eskapizmom in zanosom. V tej raziskavi smo sledili predpostavkam, da posamezne eskapistične aktivnosti ne pripadajo vnaprej določeni kategoriji, temveč je ta določena s posameznikovim stališčem in motivacijo do aktivnosti. Prepoznali smo, da se določene lastnosti posameznikov v večji meri povezujejo s specifičnimi oblikami eskapizma, ki lahko tudi vodi k pozitivnim izidom kot je npr. zanos. V skladu s preteklimi ugotovitvami, ki negativni afekt povezujejo z eskapizmom kot odmikanjem od sebstva, smo prepoznali, da tudi samoodtujenost, katere temeljno čustvo je obup, ki izhaja iz nezadovoljenih potreb, zatiranja in opuščanja ciljev in želj, napoveduje to vrsto eskapizma.

Z našo raziskavo smo pomembno prispevali k spoznanjem o eskapizmu, ki je nedavno doživel teoretično prenavo. Izpostavili smo, da gre za fenomen,

ki je v družbi naraščajoče prisoten in iz že tega naslova zasluži več raziskovalne pozornosti, obenem pa tudi, ker je bila doslej njegova potencialno pozitivna narava spregledana. Študija ima nekatere pomanjkljivosti, predvsem z vidika števila udeležencev in uporabljenih merskih pripomočkov, ki omejujejo naše ugotovitve. Pri snovanju predpostavk in interpretacije naših ugotovitev smo izhajali predvsem iz raziskav drugih področij, saj raziskav, ki bi vključevale novejši koncept eskapizma praktično ni, zato naša študija predstavlja eno prvih na tem področju. Obenem pa je naša raziskava tudi iztočnica za prihodnje, v katerih bi se lahko osredotočili na vlogo drugih osebnostnih lastnosti kot npr. odprtost za izkušnje, perfekcionizem, tip A osebnosti, osebna časovna perspektiva ipd.

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Naslov: **ESKAPIZEM: ODMIKANJE OD SEBSTVA ALI NJEGOVA RAZŠIRITEV?**

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Jezik: angleški (izvleček angleški in slovenski, povzetek slovenski)

Ključne besede: eskapizem, odmikanje od sebstva, razširjanje sebstva, čuječnost, odtujenost

Izvleček: Eskapizem, poljudno opredeljen kot pobeg iz resničnosti, je bil še do nedavnega v splošnem obravnavan kot negativen pojav, v novejšem času pa se uveljavlja model, ki izpostavlja tudi pozitivno obravnavo in ločuje med obliko eskapizma kot odmikanja od sebstva (ang. self-suppression) in obliko eskapizma kot razširjanja sebstva (ang. self-expansion). V pričujoči raziskavi smo na vzorcu 147 študentov preučevali, kakšni mehanizmi so v ozadju obeh oblik eskapizma, pri čemer so udeleženci ciljno izbrali različne eskapistične dejavnosti. Na podlagi modela dveh oblik eskapizma smo predpostavili, da se bo eskapizem kot odmikanje od sebstva povezoval z višjo stopnjo samoodtujenosti, eskapizem kot razširitev sebstva pa z višjo stopnjo čuječnosti in posredno z zanosom. Rezultati potrjujejo, da je eskapizem z odmikanjem od sebstva pozitivno povezan s samoodtujenostjo, pri čemer je slednji tudi signifikantnen prediktor eskapizma. Medtem ko se eskapizem kot razširitev sebstva ne povezuje s čuječnostjo, prav tako pa čuječnost nima vloge moderatorja v odnosu med to obliko eskapizma in zanosom, kot smo predvideli. Naša raziskava prispeva k spoznanjem o kompleksnejši naravi eskapističnih dejavnosti v odnosih do psiholoških dejavnikov. Obenem pa smo prispevali k trenutno še okrnjenemu znanju o eskapizmu in uspeli osvetliti tudi pozitivno plat, ki jo eskapizem zagotovo ima, saj ne prinaša le odmikanja od sebstva, temveč tudi njegovo obogatitev in razširitev.