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# Big 5 correlates of three measures of subjective well-being

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## Abstract

One hundred and eleven individuals completed the NEO Five Factor Inventory along with three measures of subjective well-being, the Oxford Happiness Inventory, the Depression–Happiness Scale, and the Satisfaction With Life Scale. Regression analysis showed that although Extraversion and Neuroticism best predicted scores on the Oxford Happiness Inventory, it was Neuroticism and Conscientiousness that best predicted scores on the Satisfaction with Life Scale. These results provide further evidence that Neuroticism and Extraversion are dimensions of personality related to subjective well-being. However, the results also suggest that Conscientiousness is an additional dimension of personality relevant to understanding subjective well-being. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Happiness; Personality; Big 5

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## 1. Introduction

There has been much interest from researchers in what makes people happy (see, Myers & Diener, 1995). Although much interest has focused on demographic and social-economic variables, it is thought that some people are more likely to be happier than others because of their personality.

Early work by Costa and McCrae (1980) showed that happiness was associated with greater Extraversion and lower Neuroticism. Much subsequent research has since confirmed these associations (see e.g. Brebner, Donaldson, Kirby, & Ward, 1995; Chan & Joseph, 2000; Furnham & Brewin, 1990; Hills & Argyle, 2001a,b; Lu & Shih, 1997). However, the other major dimensions of personality have not attracted as much research attention as Extraversion and Neuroticism. In terms of the Big 5 dimensions, McCrae and Costa (1991) suggest that Agreeableness and Conscientiousness should facilitate more positive experiences in social and achievement situations,

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respectively, which in turn increase subjective well-being. Openness to experience, however, should lead a person to experience both more positive and negative emotional states. No direct association should therefore be expected with Openness to experience.

DeNeve and Cooper (1998) in their meta-analysis of single trait measures associated with subjective well being provide evidence consistent with McCrae and Costa's suggestions. In particular, DeNeve and Copper (1998) show that Extraversion and Neuroticism are the strongest Big 5 predictors of happiness and that Neuroticism and Conscientiousness are the strongest Big 5 predictors of life satisfaction. There now remains a need for further investigation to confirm these findings. The aim of the present research was to extend the investigation of personality correlates of happiness to the Big 5 personality dimensions, Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness.

## 2. Method

One hundred and twenty nine residents of Warwickshire and their friends and acquaintances were recruited by personal contact with a variety of social and leisure groups at the University of Warwick. Of these, 111 (36 men, 75 women, mean age = 37.77,  $SD = 17.45$ ) fully completed a battery of measures, which included: the 60-item NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI: Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO-FFI yields scores for Extraversion (E), Neuroticism (N), Openness (O), Conscientiousness (C) and Agreeableness (A). Respondents also completed the 29-item Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI: Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989), the 25-item Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS: Joseph & Lewis, 1998), and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS: Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The SWLS assess the cognitive/evaluative aspect of happiness whereas both the OHI and DHS are global measures of happiness assessing cognitive and affective aspects. Higher scores on the OHI, DHS, and SWLS indicate greater subjective well-being.

## 3. Results

Correlations, with sex and age partialled out, were computed between scores on each of the well-being measures. Scores on the DHS (mean = 51.18,  $SD = 14.83$ ) and the OHI (mean = 37.77,  $SD = 17.45$ ) were highly associated ( $r = 0.73$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), and scores on the SWLS (mean = 24.06,  $SD = 6.89$ ) were associated with scores on the OHI ( $r = 0.56$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and the DHS ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) confirming that these three measures are all tapping related constructs.

Correlations, with sex and age partialled out, between the NEO personality dimensions and the well being measures are shown in Table 1. Higher scores on each of the subjective well-being measures were associated with greater Extraversion, lower Neuroticism, and higher Conscientiousness.

These results suggest that Conscientiousness, as well as Extraversion and Neuroticism, is a dimension of personality related to subjective well-being. However, Conscientiousness was found to be associated with scores on Neuroticism ( $r = -0.39$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and Extraversion ( $r = 0.39$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) begging the question of whether Conscientiousness had any unique association with happiness over and above what could be accounted for by Extraversion and Neuroticism. To

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