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Resilience as a mediator between extraversion, neuroticism and happiness, PA and NA



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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore the influences of extraversion and neuroticism on happiness, PA and NA and to examine the mediating effect of resilience in this relationship. NEO-Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) were administered to 289 college students. Results from path analyses (AMOS) revealed that resilience partially mediated the association between extraversion and happiness and PA, and the association between neuroticism and happiness and NA. Furthermore, the association between extraversion and NA, and the association between neuroticism and PA, were fully mediated by resilience. This study makes a contribution to the potential mechanism of the association between extraversion, neuroticism and affective components of subjective well-being.

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1. Introduction

In the general area of subjective well-being (SWB), researchers have studied happiness and unhappiness, positive affect (PA), negative affect (NA), and general life satisfaction. DeNeve and Cooper (1998) made distinctions among these concepts. General life satisfaction is a cognitive appraisal of one's general state. Happiness and positive and negative affect are the affective appraisals of SWB. Happiness is the preponderance of positive affect over negative affect with a focus on an overall affective appraisal, while positive and negative affect are generally focused on the recent occurrence of specific positive and negative emotions (Spangler & Palrecha, 2004). Accordingly, it indicates that happiness is the overall affective factor and PA and NA are the specific affective components of SWB. Studies have found that PA and NA are independent from each other, though both are correlated individually with general measures of happiness (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). As the affective components of SWB, happiness and PA have been found to be correlated with a variety of favorable life outcomes, such as work success, effective coping, stronger social relationships, mental health and even physical health and longevity (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Therefore, the presence of

happiness and PA and the absence of NA are central in people's life and play a key role in predicting individuals' mental and physical health.

1.1. Extraversion, neuroticism and happiness, PA and NA

Personality traits have long been recognized as the major determinants of happiness. Extraversion is found to be positively related to happiness, and neuroticism is found to be negatively related to happiness (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Cheng & Furnham, 2003; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Evidence from cross-culture studies on East and West specifically China and Great Britain suggests that extraversion and neuroticism are the major predictors and accounting for up to half of the variance of happiness (Furnham & Cheng, 1999).

For the association between personality and affect, the theoretical model from trait perspective proposes that personality exerts a "top-down" influence on affect. Extraversion and neuroticism are not only directly responsible for regulating individual difference in the experience of PA and NA, respectively (Costa & McCrae, 1980), but also indirectly influence long term affect through predisposing a person to participate in activities that induce PA and NA (McCrae & Costa, 1991). The association between extraversion and PA, and neuroticism and NA are well-documented (Lucas & Baird, 2004; Lucas & Fujita, 2000). However, some recent studies have found the negative correlations between extraversion and NA, and neuroticism and PA (Ng, 2009; Vittersø, 2001; Yik & Russell, 2001). Ng (2009) has argued that the correlations between

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extraversion and NA, and neuroticism and PA are not necessarily weak or insignificant, they can be observed in some situations (e.g., unpleasant). Just as some research indicates, despite extraversion is associated highly with PA, neuroticism is associated highly with NA, extraversion and neuroticism are correlated with both positive and negative affective states (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000; Ng, 2009; Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008).

Recently, some longitudinal studies regarding the association between personality and well-being might further indicate that personality is the antecedent of affective components of SWB. For example, Gale, Booth, Mttus, Kuh, and Deary (2013) examined the effects of neuroticism and extraversion at ages 16 and 26 years on mental wellbeing (including positive affect, psychological functioning and interpersonal relationships) and life satisfaction at age 60–64, and found that extraversion had direct, positive effects on both measures of wellbeing, whereas neuroticism had impact on wellbeing and life satisfaction indirectly through susceptibility to psychological distress and physical health problems. In general, personality dispositions in youth had enduring influence on well-being assessed about 40 years later. Similarly, Kokko, Tolvanen, and Pulkkinen (2013) found the initial level of the personality traits contributed to psychological wellbeing. Low neuroticism and high extraversion were highly associated with psychological well-being, and these associations were also found during the mid-adult years.

As studies reviewed above, extraversion and neuroticism can be thought as precursors of happiness, PA and NA. However, the psychological mechanisms, through which extraversion and neuroticism might influence these affective components of SWB (happiness, PA and NA) are not well understood. The existing evidence has showed that extraversion and neuroticism not only directly exert influences on happiness but also through several mediating variables such as social competence (Argyle & Lu, 1990), self-esteem (Cheng & Furnham, 2003), and religious orientation (Moltafet, Mazidi, & Sadati, 2010). In addition, extraversion and neuroticism have been found to not only directly exert influences on PA and NA but also through predisposing a person to participate in activities (McCrae & Costa, 1991). Taken together, these studies suggest that there may be other potential mediators underlying the relationship between extraversion, neuroticism and the affective components of SWB.

1.2. Resilience as the mediator of the relations of personality and happiness, PA and NA

As an important psychological resource, Block and Kremen (1996) refer resilience as an ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences and flexibly adapt to the changing environment. Ryff and Singer (1996) remarked that relative to the role of resilience in avoiding illness or negative behavioral outcomes, resilience should be equally received attention on its effect on positive outcomes. Accordingly, Ryff, Singer, Dienberg Love, and Essex (1998) defined resilience as the capacity to maintain or recover high well-being in the face of life adversity. Studies have showed that resilient individuals could maintain their physical and psychological health both through buffering negative consequences from difficult times (Connor & Davidson, 2003), and through improving psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2000). Thus, resilience can be seen as an important source of SWB.

Previous empirical studies have showed that extraversion is positively related to resilience, and neuroticism is negatively associated with resilience (Campbell-Sills, Cohan, & Stein, 2006; Riolli, Savicki, & Cepani, 2002). There are also longitudinal studies have indicated that personality is a predictor of resilience. Werner and Smith (1992) have showed that children who are more temperamentally positive become more resilient as adults. Shiner and

Masten (2012) recently found that the high resilient group in emerging adult and young adult showed higher childhood conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness and lower neuroticism than the low resilient group.

Overall, as mentioned above, extraversion and neuroticism can be thought as precursors of happiness, PA, NA and resilience. Resilience as an important resource of SWB has found to be firmly correlated with increases in PA, and decreases in NA (Liu, Wang, & Li, 2012; Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). Thus, in consideration of the associations between extraversion, neuroticism, resilience and happiness, PA and NA, the present study hypothesized that resilience might act as a mediator between extraversion, neuroticism and happiness, PA and NA.

1.3. The present study

The primary purposes of the current study were to replicate the relations of extraversion, neuroticism, happiness, PA and NA, and to extend previous studies by exploring the potential mediating mechanism in this relationship in college students. College students are a special group at the emerging adult years, they become independently, but still mentally immature. In facing daily study or interpersonal relationship, college student are more likely to experience stress as compared to other age groups. Thus, the current study might shed light on the potential psychological mechanism in improving college students' well-being. Based on the preceding rationale and the available literature reviewed above, it is plausible to assume that extraversion and neuroticism exerted their effects on happiness, PA and NA through resilience.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Two hundred and eighty-nine undergraduates (42 males, 247 females) were recruited from educational psychology classes at a large university in northwestern China. Mean age of the sample was 20.0 years (SD = 1.4). In regards to ethnicity, the vast majority of the participants were Han (more than 96%).

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Extraversion and neuroticism

Extraversion and neuroticism were assessed by the shortened Chinese version of Costa and McCrae (1992) NEO-FFI, which contained five 12-item scales and showed good reliability and validity on the Chinese sample (Yang et al., 1999). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .80 for the extraversion subscale and was .82 for the neuroticism subscale.

2.2.2. Resilience

Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) including 25 items was used to assess resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Items were rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 0 (*not at all true*) to 4 (*true nearly all of the time*). Higher scores correspond to greater resilience. The Chinese version of the CD-RISC, translated by Yu and Zhang (2007), was demonstrated to be a reliable and valid measurement in assessing resilience in the Chinese sample (Yu & Zhang, 2007). The Cronbach's alpha of the resilience scale in the present study was .90.

2.2.3. Happiness

Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI) consisting of 29 items was used to assess individuals' overall happiness (Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989). Each item was presented in four incremental

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