



Character as a predictor of life satisfaction in Czech adolescent sample: 3-Year follow-up study

Michaela Porubanova-Norquist*

Masaryk University, Faculty of Medicine Research Institute of Preventive and Social Pediatrics, Brno, Czech Republic
Masaryk University, Faculty of Social Studies, Department of Psychology, Brno, Czech Republic

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 November 2011
Received in revised form 12 February 2012
Accepted 22 March 2012
Available online 18 April 2012

Keywords:

Life satisfaction
Cloninger's model of temperament and character
TCI
Adolescence

ABSTRACT

The study examined personality predictors (based on Cloninger's psychobiological model of temperament and character – TCI) of life satisfaction in a sample of 15-year-old Czech adolescents ($N = 173$) and subsequently 3 years after. The focus of the study was to determine the personality dimensions that predict life satisfaction and how those change over 3 years of adolescence. Of all dimensions, significant differences between the two age groups were found only in the character dimensions Self-Directedness and Self-Transcendence. Using stepwise regression analysis, the character scale Self-Directedness alone accounted for 15% of the variance in life satisfaction among 15-year-old adolescents, whereas in the 18-year-old group, 30% of the variance in life satisfaction was explained by the character dimension Self-Directedness and the temperament dimensions Harm Avoidance and Reward Dependence. In both age groups, only Self-Directedness seems to make a unique contribution towards explaining life satisfaction. The results demonstrate that character changes might also account for a great amount of variance in life satisfaction.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Well-being, a multidimensional construct defined as one's assessment of life in general (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999), comprises three semi-dependent components: life satisfaction (a cognitive component) and positive and negative affect (affective components). Life satisfaction (LS) or subjective well-being, i.e., an individual's subjective assessment of overall quality of life (Diener & Diener, 1995), brings about many benefits in people's lives, in social (e.g., Marks & Fleming, 1999), mental (Lewinsohn, Redner, & Seeley, 1991), and physical health (Howell, Kern, & Lyubomirsky, 2007; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005a) domains.

Although widely studied in adult populations, research concerning the personality determinants of life satisfaction in the adolescent population has gained attention only recently (Fogle, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2002; Garcia, 2011a,b; Ho, Cheung, & Cheung, 2008; Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009). Several studies have shown that personality is an essential determinant of life satisfaction (Cloninger & Zohar, 2011; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Emmons & Diener, 1985; Fogle et al., 2002; Garcia, 2011a,b; Josefsson et al., 2011; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005b; Rigby & Huebner, 2005). LS seems to be particularly important in adolescence because it mediates the relationship between negative life events

and subsequent externalizing behavior problems (Suldo & Huebner, 2004), but also because lasting LS arises as a result of meaningful values and personal goals during character development (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

Furthermore, personality variables (Big Five Factors, McCrae & Costa, 1990) are consistently the best predictors of LS (Diener et al., 1999), even more than environmental or demographic factors. Namely, Neuroticism and Extraversion correlate with LS in adulthood and adolescents (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Garcia, 2011a; Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, 2004; Schimmack, Oishi, Furr, & Funder, 2004). The heritability and relative stability, particularly of those two traits, have been demonstrated (Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001). However, most of the studies focused on adolescents' well-being investigated the relationship between personality assessed by trait models of personality (Big Five Factors, Costa & McCrae, 1992), omitting an important contribution by character (the Temperament and Character Inventory, Cloninger, Svrakic, & Przybeck, 1993) to life satisfaction as pointed out by Garcia (2011a). Thus, we adopted Cloninger's biopsychosocial model of personality, which deems personality an interaction between a biological base (i.e., temperament) and its modification elicited by self experience (i.e., character) (Cloninger, 1994, 2004; Cloninger et al., 1993). While temperament is genetically influenced, character is mutable due to age and maturation. Character is defined as a construct representing one's self-government, as it modulates the leverage of unconscious or preconscious automatic percepts and affects managed by temperament by assigning meaning to them (Cloninger et al., 1993; Svrakic et al., 2002).

* Address: Masaryk University, Faculty of Social Studies, Department of Psychology, Jostova 10, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic. Tel.: +420 776 643 708.

E-mail address: mise199@gmail.com

Character has been found to strongly correlate with well-being, while temperament is only weakly related (Cloninger, 2004; Cloninger & Zohar, 2011; Josefsson et al., 2011; Ruini, Ottolini, Rafanelli, et al., 2003). A study by Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006) showed that intentional, self-regulatory behaviors work jointly with traits to explain well-being. People experiencing greater life satisfaction are more likely to perceive greater self-control (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002), tend to be more cooperative and centered on others (Williams & Shiaw, 1999), have a greater locus of control (Ash & Huebner, 2001) and greater self-efficacy (Fogle et al., 2002). Those characteristics are embedded in Cloninger's definition of character (Garcia, 2011b), which consists of three dimensions pertaining to self-relation to self (Self-Directedness – SD), to others (Cooperativeness – CO), and to the universe at large (Self-Transcendence – ST) (Cloninger, 2004).

While equally important to studying adult populations, examining the relationship between personality and life satisfaction among adolescents is particularly important as it might help in the understanding of the developmental aspect of the relationship between personality and life satisfaction. As character evolves it can modulate the way certain negative situations are experienced and promote healthier coping strategies, and subsequently improve one's happiness.

Garcia (2011a) states that longitudinal studies concentrating on the transition between adolescence and adulthood need to be conducted in order to answer the question of the role of character in life satisfaction. Our study focused on examining this linkage between personality and life satisfaction in Czech adolescents at 15 and subsequently 18 years of age. Our study was premised on the assumption that character is an important predictor of life satisfaction among adolescents due to its role in the perception of experienced emotions (Cloninger, 2004; Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, & Diener, 2005). Furthermore, we took into account that the importance of character increases with age, predominantly between adolescence and early adulthood (Cloninger et al., 1993). Arnett (2000) suggests that engagement of character is very important for the period of emerging adulthood, i.e., the period between 18 AND 25-years-old. This period is characteristic of individualistic qualities of character, such as accepting responsibility for oneself and making independent decisions (Arnett, 1998). Taken together, character should gain significance in explaining life satisfaction with increasing age (i.e., in our case at the age of 18).

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and procedure

The research was conducted with 173 adolescents (98 girls, 75 boys) as a part of the ELSPAC¹ study. The adolescents were examined at 15 years of age and subsequently at 18 years of age. The respondents participated voluntarily in the research and they signed informed consent forms.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Temperament and Character Inventory – TCI (Cloninger, Przybeck, Svrakic, & Wetzel, 1994)

Personality characteristics were measured by Cloninger's Temperament and Character Inventory – TCI (Cloninger et al., 1994). A Czech version of the TCI was obtained from the Prague Psychiat-

ric Centre, with the additional kind approval of C.R. Cloninger. TCI describes personality by means of seven basic factors of the psychobiological model: *Temperament* dimensions encompass Novelty Seeking (e.g., "It is hard for me to stay interested in the same things for a long time because my attention often gets distracted by other things"), Harm Avoidance (e.g., "I often have to stop what I am doing because I start to get worried about what can go wrong"), Reward Dependence (e.g., "I often give into the wishes of friends") and Persistence (e.g., "I often push myself to the point of exhaustion or try to do more than I really can").

Character dimensions include the factors of Self-Directedness (e.g., "Each day I again try to get a step closer to my objectives"), Cooperativeness (e.g., "I can generally accept other people for how they are, also if they are very different to me") and Self-Transcendence (e.g., "I am often called absent-minded because I am so immersed in what I am doing that everything else passes me by"). The TCI consists of 240 items to which respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale from "definitely false" (1) to "definitely true" (5).

The age of fifteen is the lowest recommended age to use the adult version of the TCI (Cloninger et al., 1994). Reliability of each of the scales measured by Cronbach's alpha ranged from .83 (NS) to .89 (HA) for temperament scales and from .84 (SD) to .87 (ST, CO) for character scales in 15 years of age, and from .83 (NS) to .89 (HA) for temperament scales and from .88 (SD) to .89 (ST, CO) for character scales at 18 years of age.

2.2.2. Satisfaction with Life Scale – SWLS (Pavot & Diener, 1993)

A global scale of life satisfaction (Satisfaction with Life Scale – SWLS, Diener, Suh, & Oishi, 1997; Pavot & Diener, 1993), translated by the authors, was used to measure life satisfaction. This scale consists of 5 items (e.g., "So far I have gotten the important things I want in life") which are evaluated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Completely Disagree (1) to Completely Agree (5). The minimum value of the score is 5, the maximum value 25. A higher score indicates a higher life satisfaction. Reliability measured by Cronbach's alpha was .83 and .84 for ages 15 and 18, respectively.

2.3. Statistical analyses

Correlations were used to study the relationships between LS and individual TCI dimensions. Paired *t*-tests with Bonferroni corrections were computed to study differences between 15 and 18 year-olds in the observed variables. Stepwise regression analyses were performed in order to study the variance in LS explained by individual personality dimensions. All analyses were conducted using SPSS for Windows version 19.0.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary analyses

Means, standard deviations, and differences between the study variables for 15 and 18-year-old adolescents are presented in Table 1. A paired samples *t*-test showed no significant differences in life satisfaction between the two different age groups ($t(172) = .02$, $p = .987$). However, significant differences were found in character scales between the groups of 15 and 18-year-olds for Self-Directedness ($t(172) = 2.25$; $p < .003$) (even after Bonferroni correction, $p = .05/16$) and for Self-Transcendence ($t(172) = -5.29$, $p < .05$)². No significant differences for temperament scales (NS, HA, RD,

¹ European Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood is an epidemiological study under the auspices of the WHO, with participation of several European countries – Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia, the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic. The project deals with long-term monitoring of the risk factors and protective factors of bio-psychosocial development of children born in the early 90s.

² Interestingly, scale CO (Cooperativeness) had sig.= .06, but it was a scale where a difference, although not significant, was observed.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات