



Openness to experience and active older adults' life satisfaction: A trait and facet-level analysis

Yannick Stephan *

University of Grenoble, EA 3742, BP 53, 38041 Grenoble cedex 9, France

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 February 2009
Received in revised form 1 May 2009
Accepted 22 May 2009
Available online 18 June 2009

Keywords:

Openness to experience
Retirement
Older adults
Facets
Life satisfaction

ABSTRACT

Although the contribution of personality on life satisfaction is well-recognized, less attention has been devoted to openness to experience in gerontological research. The present study aimed at testing the relation between openness to experience and life satisfaction among active older adults, both at the broad and facet-level. Two hundred and thirty-five retired adults aged from 58 to 85 years were administered the openness to experience scale of the NEO-PIR and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Multiple regression analyses revealed that openness to experience added small but incremental variance to the prediction of life satisfaction, beyond subjective health and financial satisfaction. Openness to ideas and to feelings were both positively related to older individuals' life satisfaction, while controlling for subjective health and financial satisfaction, and accounted for a higher amount of variance than the broad openness factor. The present study suggests that during the retirement years, openness is a resource for life satisfaction. Open individuals are more likely to benefit from the opportunities of personal growth proposed during this period, and thus to satisfy their needs. In addition, a facet-level analysis could provide a fined-grained explanation of the contribution of openness to experience on life satisfaction.

© 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Adaptation of subjective well-being (SWB) has become an important topic in gerontological research in the past decades (e.g., Diener & Suh, 1997; Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). Research has reported that life satisfaction, the cognitive component of SWB, increases until approximately age 65–70 and then declines (Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). However, there are individual differences in life satisfaction level, rate, and direction of changes around the average trajectory (Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). The present study was designed to gain insights about the determinants of life satisfaction among older adults, and the factors which could potentially explain these individual differences.

1.1. Resources and life satisfaction

Older adults' life satisfaction could be explained by the individual access to key resources (Bishop, Martin, & Poon, 2006; Diener & Fujita, 1995). Diener and Fujita (1995) defined resources as material, social, or personal characteristics that a person possesses, which may be critical in promoting and maintaining well-being,

because they help him/her achieve his/her personal goals and fulfil his/her basic physical and psychological needs. Among older adults, being married or having a partner is a strong resource for life satisfaction, because it provides companionship and social support (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). Income and financial status determine the involvement in satisfying activities or the fulfilment of the individuals' need, promoting life satisfaction (Johnson & Krueger, 2006). Studies have reported that higher physical health is associated with higher life satisfaction because it allows one to pursue valued goals and to engage in satisfying activities (Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). Diener and Fujita (1995) consider certain personality traits as resources that are likely to aid individuals in achieving certain types of goals. Thus, an inclusion of personality in addition to health, marital status, and financial resources is needed to obtain a more accurate picture of the foundations of older adults' life satisfaction.

1.2. Personality and life satisfaction

According to existing research, personality variables play a crucial role in producing individual differences in life satisfaction and other well-being variables (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Diener et al., 1999; Steel, Schmidt, & Schultz, 2008). Personality assessment based on the five-factor model (FFM) of personality, i.e., neuroticism,

* Tel.: +33 0476635081.

E-mail address: yannick.stephan@ujf-grenoble.fr

extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1989) has been shown to contribute to a substantial portion of well-being indicators (Steel et al., 2008). Although recent meta-analyses provided support for the contribution of the five dimensions for various indicators of SWB, such as positive and negative affects (Steel et al., 2008), research conducted on life satisfaction among midlife and older adults has mainly focused on the role of neuroticism and extraversion (Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). According to these studies, high levels of neuroticism are related to low life satisfaction, whereas extraverts can expect higher, sustained levels of life satisfaction as they age (Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). However, further work is needed to identify the contribution of personality variables on older individuals' life satisfaction. Although the FFM has been widely investigated, openness to experience is considered as the least understood of the five-factors (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). DeNeve and Cooper (1998) suggested that openness to experience is largely irrelevant for SWB, at least when compared with the remaining four factors. Thus, less attention has been devoted in gerontological research to this dimension. Despite these assumptions, the present study suggested that openness to experience could be an important resource for older adults' life satisfaction.

1.3. Openness to experience and older individuals' life satisfaction

According to the FFM, openness to experience refers to the individual's propensity to be open to a variety of novel ideas, values, and experiences (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This personality trait refers to cultured, curious, imaginative, broad-minded, and artistically sensitive people, and its assessment allows a distinction between people who appreciate the merits of trying new things, to grasp new ideas and who enjoy them, and people who prefer familiar, routine, and traditional experiences (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1997). A high level of openness to experience is associated to a broader range of experiences, whereas "closed" people report fewer hobbies and a narrow behavioural repertoire (Little, Lecci, & Watkinson, 1992). Open people are characterized by a need to enlarge and examine experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1991), and to seek out opportunity for personal growth and development (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997). Thus, as a part of a broad engagement dimension (Olson, 2005), openness to experience could lead people to have life experiences that facilitate SWB (McCrae & Costa, 1991).

Openness to experience could be a valuable resource for older adults' life satisfaction, because it could aid them to face with a crucial developmental challenge based on the establishment of a satisfactory post-retirement lifestyle (Van Solinge & Henkens, 2008). Indeed, the post-retirement years offer a chance of freedom of choice and of pursuing interests and sources of pleasure, and present many opportunities for growth and development (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2004; Reitzes, Mutran, & Fernandez, 1996). Post-retirement behaviours such as pursuing interests, hobbies, and activities, are crucial, because they provide opportunities to experience meaning, purpose and growth (Fouquereau, Fernandez, & Mullet, 1999). Thus, based on the tendency of open individuals to seek personal growth and development and to try new things and experiences, it is likely that open older individuals may fully benefit from these opportunities, and may have experiences or engage in activities and leisure which could satisfy their basic psychological needs, resulting in positive life satisfaction.

In addition, open individuals adapt more quickly and effectively to changes (LePine, Colquitt, & Erez, 2000). They also make adjustment to existing attitudes and behaviours once they have been exposed to new ideas or situations (John, 1990). Duberstein et al. (2003) further suggested that open older people are more likely to engage in activities that help them maintain their health and

level of functioning. Thus, openness to experience is an adaptive personality variable as illustrated by Kling, Ryff, Love, and Essex (2003), who found that in the context of community relocation, open individuals tend to develop higher levels of self-esteem. In summary, open older adults could be better equipped to cope with age-related physical and social challenges, which could contribute to the maintenance of their life satisfaction.

1.4. Openness to experience facets and older individuals' life satisfaction

Focusing only on the broad trait of openness to experience may lead one to underestimate the importance of this dimension for older adults' life satisfaction. Indeed, recent research called for a facet-level analysis, which could provide a more detailed examination of personality (Steel et al., 2008). Thus, in addition to a broad-level of analysis, the present study proposes to examine the relative contribution of the six facets of openness to experience, defined by the NEO-PIR operationalization (Costa & McCrae, 1992), on older individuals' life satisfaction, namely openness to fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values. Considering facets could have greater predictive power when compared with broad measures of personality (McAdams & Donnellan, 2009; Paunonen & Ashton, 2001), and may account for approximately double the amount of variance than at a trait-level (Schimmack, Oishi, Furr, & Funder, 2004; Steel et al., 2008). Paunonen and Ashton (2001) argued that facet-level investigations may improve the understanding of how personality traits are linked to consequential outcomes. Furthermore, McAdams and Donnellan (2009) found instances where facets were more strongly correlated with criterion variables than were the corresponding Big Five scores. However, this contribution is depressed when facets are aggregated at the trait-level (McAdams & Donnellan, 2009). When aggregated at the trait-level, only a few facets may be related to outcomes, meaning that the other irrelevant facets are essentially adding error; alternatively, facets, though positively correlated with each other, may show correlations in the opposite direction to outcomes (Steel et al., 2008). Thus, personality-criterion associations could be obscured when personality facets are aggregated into broad personality factors (McAdams & Donnellan, 2009; Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). Based on these results, focusing only on the broad openness factor could obscure important insights about the contribution of openness facets. Thus, a facet-level analysis could provide a fine-grained analysis of the contribution of openness to experience on life satisfaction. However, no studies have yet considered this relationship.

1.5. The present study

In summary, although the contribution of personality on life satisfaction is well-recognized, less attention has been devoted to openness to experience, despite its potential role as a valuable resource among older adults. Thus, the present study specifically focused on the contribution of openness to experience on active older adults' life satisfaction, engaged in a range of post-retirement activities. Based on existing research (Kling et al., 2003; LePine et al., 2000; Schmutte & Ryff, 1997), it was first hypothesized that openness to experience would be positively related to life satisfaction, over and beyond the contribution of important resources such as health, financial situation, and marital status. A second exploratory purpose was to identify which openness facet contributes the most to life satisfaction. Given the paucity of research to have considered the openness facets in the prediction of life satisfaction, no a priori hypothesis was formulated. However, in line with recent research (Schimmack et al., 2004; Steel et al., 2008), it

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