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Personality and Individual Differences 38 (2005) 1085–1096

PERSONALITY AND
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

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Personality correlates of happiness and sadness: EPQ-R and TPQ compared

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Received 8 December 2003; received in revised form 18 June 2004; accepted 9 July 2004

Available online 2 October 2004

Abstract

This study assesses the relative strengths of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R) and the Tridimensional Personality Questionnaire (TPQ) as predictors of mood states. This study adds to the relatively few published reports assessing the relationships between Cloninger's (TPQ) and normal mood.

870 students completed the TPQ, EPQ-R, the State and Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), the Befindlichkeitskala (BFS), the General Health Questionnaire 28 (GHQ-28) and the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI). Harm Avoidance (TPQ), Neuroticism (EPQ-R) and Extraversion (EPQ-R) correlated highly with both positive and negative mood (r from .4 to above .6). Harm Avoidance (r between .46 and .60) and Neuroticism (r from .42 to .63) were equally the best predictors of negative mood but Harm Avoidance was the best predictor of Happiness ($r = -.67$ women, $-.69$ men). Harm Avoidance has a high correlation with both Extraversion ($r = -.60$) and Neuroticism ($r = .68$). Psychoticism played a small but significant role in explaining the variance in mood.

The traits of Harm Avoidance and Neuroticism have a high influence on mood state. Those low on Harm Avoidance tend to be emotionally stable (low Neuroticism) Extraverts. The role of Psychoticism on mood needs to be explored further.

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Keywords: Tridimensional personality questionnaire; TPQ; Mood; Eysenck personality questionnaire; Happiness

1. Introduction

The trait systems of Cloninger and Eysenck are based on psychobiological models of personality (Cloninger, 1987; Eysenck, 1967), and intrinsic to both these theories is that personality traits predict mood states. Eysenck proposes that Neuroticism, Extraversion and Psychoticism are broad traits accounting for much of human personality variance (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985), whereas Cloninger proposes Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence and Novelty Seeking as fundamental traits (Cloninger, 1987). This paper addresses the relationships between normal mood and these psychobiological dimensions of personality.

The relationships between mood in healthy volunteers and the EPQ have been explored extensively. Neuroticism correlates positively with negative mood and Extraversion correlates positively with positive mood (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Kardum & Hudek-Knezevic, 1996; Wilson & Gullone, 1999; Williams, 1990; Furnham & Brewin, 1990; Furnham & Cheng, 1999). The relationships between mood and the TPQ have not been investigated to the same extent. Harm Avoidance consistently correlates positively with negative mood measures and correlates negatively with positive mood. This is perhaps not surprising when Eysenck's and Cloninger's personality models are compared. Harm Avoidance correlates highly with both Neuroticism and Extraversion ($r > 0.50$ and -0.50 , respectively; Zuckerman & Cloninger, 1996), and EPQ-N and EPQ-E both load highly on a "Harm Avoidance" factor in an exploratory factor analysis at the scale level (loading > 0.45 ; Sher, Bartholow, & Wood, 2000). Reward Dependence and Novelty Seeking have in general shown small to negligible correlations with negative mood measures (for example: Giancola, Zeichner, Newbolt, & Stennett, 1994; Krebs, Weyers, & Janke, 1998; Naito, Kijima, & Kitamura, 2000; Peirson & Heuchert, 2001; Svrakic, Przybeck, & Cloninger, 1992).

Both Neuroticism and Harm Avoidance are highly related to depressed mood. Compared with healthy controls, Neuroticism and Harm Avoidance scores are higher in patients with depression and in patients in remission from a major depressive episode (Hansenne et al., 1999; Hecht, van Calker, Berger, & von Zerssen, 1998; Roy, 1990; Young et al., 1995). High Neuroticism scores predict depression in previously never ill controls (Hirschfeld, Klerman, Clayton, & Keller, 1983; Hirschfeld et al., 1989) and are related to a lifetime prevalence of depression (Kendler, Neale, Kessler, Heath, & Eaves, 1993).

Both Eysenck's and Cloninger's models are biologically based and inherent to both theories is the hypothesis that personality factors predict transient mood states. Here we report the first study to compare the relationships between the EPQ-R, a well established measure of personality traits, with the TPQ and various key mood states. The TPQ has gained prominence in recent years by postulated associations between its dimensions and neurotransmitter systems (Benjamin et al., 1996; Cloninger, Adolfsson, & Svrakic, 1996; Ebstein et al., 1996). This study describes the relationships of the TPQ, EPQ-R with both negative and positive mood and whether the TPQ explains more variance in mood than the EPQ-R. It thus provides a powerful, comparative study of the predictive validity of two prominent personality theories.

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