



Personality, smoking motivation, and self-efficacy to quit

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Abstract

Two studies are described which investigated the association between personality and smoking motivation. In the first study, 167 cigarette smokers completed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire—Revised, the Self-Administered Nicotine Dependency Scale, and the Smoking Motivation Questionnaire. Personality was associated with smoking motivation, with more neurotic individuals smoking for negative affect control, and more introverted individuals smoking for social skills enhancement. Results of the first study also show that smoking motivation is associated with self-efficacy to quit, with low self-efficacy being associated with automatic habitual smoking, negative affect control, and social skills deficit. In the second study, 100 cigarette smokers completed the Schizotypal Traits Questionnaire, Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, and the Smoking Motivation Questionnaire. Depression was specifically associated with smoking for negative affect control whereas schizotypy was associated with smoking for intellectual and sensory stimulation. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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Although the prevalence of smoking has decreased over the last decade, around one-third of the population regularly smoke tobacco. Most of these report that they would like to give up smoking but that they find it difficult to go without smoking even for a day (Ogden, 1996). For health psychologists, understanding the factors that lead to the maintenance of tobacco smoking is of great potential importance in developing new intervention techniques to help people give up.

Eysenck originally hypothesised that more extraverted people smoke in situations lacking in stimulation in order to increase their cortical arousal, and that those higher in neuroticism smoke in anxiety provoking situations to decrease their cortical arousal (Eysenck, 1973). A number of

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studies have since reported differences on Eysenck's personality dimensions between smokers and non-smokers consistent with these predictions. For example, smokers have been found to score higher on extraversion (e.g. Cherry & Kiernan, 1976; Helgason, Fredrikson, Dyba, & Steineck, 1995; Patton, Barnes, & Murray, 1993; Rae, 1975), and neuroticism (e.g. Cherry & Kiernan, 1976; McCrae, Costa, & Bosse, 1978; Spielberger & Jacobs, 1982), than non-smokers. Other work has also found that smokers score higher on psychoticism (e.g. Canals, Blade, & Domenech, 1997; McManus & Weeks, 1982; Patton et al., 1993) than non-smokers. Also, the personality characteristics of ex-smokers has been found to be different from current smokers (Patton et al., 1993) and the frequency of attempts to give up smoking has been shown to be related to personality (Helgason et al., 1995). Having established that there are differences in personality between smokers and non-smokers on these dimensions goes some way toward helping us to understand the psychological processes which might maintain smoking behaviour. However, there is considerable overlap between the personality scores of smokers and non-smokers, and personality factors alone are therefore unable to account for the maintenance of smoking. Eysenck also discussed the interaction of personality with other factors to explain the maintenance of smoking. More recent research in this direction has focused on individual differences in personality among smokers and the relationship of personality to smoking motivation (Spielberger, 1986). Therapeutically, the focus on smoking motivation factors is of value as these factors are potentially modifiable.

Evidence from questionnaire studies suggests that smoking is often a way of coping with negative emotions, and that more neurotic smokers are often motivated to smoke for reasons of emotional control. For example, Papakyriazi and Joseph (1998) found that more neurotic smokers, as assessed using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991), scored higher on the Negative Affect Control Scale of the Smoking Motivation Questionnaire (Spielberger, 1986). This finding replicated previous research (Pritchard & Kay, 1993; Spielberger, 1986).

But Neuroticism is not the only personality dimension related to smoking motivation. Papakyriazi and Joseph (1998) also found that more introverted smokers used cigarettes to try and enhance their social skills, as assessed using the social skills deficit scale of the Self-Administered Nicotine-Dependence Scale (Davis, Hurt, Offord, Lauger, Morse, & Bruce, 1994). These results are of much potential interest to health psychologists working in applied psychology settings. By understanding how personality is related to smoking motivation, we should be better equipped to offer intervention programmes to smokers. For example, the research points to the need to tailor smoking cessation programmes for each individual in terms of their own personality and smoking motivation.

One limitation of the Papakyriazi and Joseph (1998) study, however, was that the sample was relatively small, and before recommending the development of interventions based on this research there is a need to establish the relationships between personality and smoking motivation. Papakyriazi and Joseph (1998) also investigated the motivational correlates of self-efficacy to quit, finding that those with the lowest self-efficacy were also those who were the most automatic and habitual smokers. The aim of the first study was to replicate the Papakyriazi and Joseph (1998) study in order to provide further evidence that personality is associated with smoking motivation, and that smoking motivation is associated with self-efficacy to quit.

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