

Relationship between happiness and conscientiousness



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This study looked at the influence of the happiness on the Conscientiousness factor of the Big Five personality factors and this has been achieved by a sample consisted of 145 (121 females and 24 males) undergraduate Psychology students that completed two questionnaires, each questionnaire measuring a different variable. The interpretation of data has been done by using statistical measurement software. According to the results, a statistically significant relation between happiness and the Conscientiousness trait has been acknowledged and has been noted that similar results have been obtained by Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2007).

Introduction

This study is a partial replication of the study run by Chamorro-Premuzic et al (2007) and unlike the original study that looked at the relationship between happiness (Argyle et al., 1989), the Big Five personality factors (Gosling et al., 2003) and emotional intelligence factor (Petrides & Furnham, 2001), the partial replication examined the relationship between happiness (Argyle et al., 1989) and the Conscientiousness factor (Gosling et al., 2003).

The Big Five traits (McCrae et al., 1987), also known as OCEAN, are Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Davey, 2011) which resulted from the psychometric theoretical approach explained by Davey (2008). Galton's (1884) hypothesis of personality traits has been tested by Allport et al. (1936), who linked 17953 terms, defined as trait-names, to personality; some being related to human behaviour. These lists of terms have been reduced by Cantell (1965) to sixteen, by Eysenck (1992) to three and to five by McCrae et al., (1987).

McCrae et al., (1987) described conscientiousness as the ability to control, regulate, and direct behaviour of self that has a great influence on the ability to fulfil tasks. Individuals with high levels of conscientiousness are identified for their ability to formulate and organize long-term goals and work consistently towards achieving them. They are also known to be responsible and reliable persons.

The results of the study run by Chamorro-Premuzic et al (2007) indicated a strong relationship between happiness and the Big Five traits (McCrae et al., 1987), showing a very strong connexion with three traits: Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Agreeableness.

The research hypotheses tested by the current study is:

H1: The scores on the factor of Conscientiousness will significantly differ between happy and non-happy participants.

Methods

3. 1 Participants

The participants of the study were 145 first year Psychology students from the University of the West of England in Bristol. The number of females that participated was 121, while the number of males was 24.

3. 2 Design

The current study has an experimental design presenting an independent sample design for which a between group design has been chosen.

3. 3 Material

The measures used for this study are the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ; Argyle et al., 1989) and the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling et al., 2003). These have been included in the Appendixes and annotated Appendix 1 and respectively Appendix 2. The OHQ is formed from 29 questions/statements, each of them having a 1 to 6 Likert scale response option, where the response options varied from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The TIPI contains 10 traits with a 1 to 7 Likert scale response option. Comparatively to the OHQ, the fourth option is a middle option of response representing a neutral opinion, “neither agree nor disagree”. The other response options varied from “disagree strongly” to “agree strongly”.

Hogan and Roberts (1996) classified scales in two categories: unidimensional scales and multidimensional scales. A unidimensional scale measures only one domain, while a multidimensional scale can measure multiple domains.

3. 4 Procedure

The participants have been asked to complete the questionnaires during a seminar and the alteration of their responses by another participant has been prevented. For the OHQ the items 1, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28 and 29 have received a reversed scoring. The sum of the normal and reversed scores represented the final value of the OHQ. For the TIPI the items 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 have received a reversed scoring. After obtaining the new scores, the questions have been paired, each pair's score representing a different trait's value: $Q1 + Q6[R] = \text{Extraversion}$; $Q2[R] + Q7 =$

Agreeableness ; $Q3 + Q8[R] = \text{Conscientiousness}$; $Q4[R] + Q9 = \text{Emotional}$
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Stability; and $Q5 + Q10[R] =$ Openness to Experiences. The final values of the questionnaires have been entered electronically on a webpage created for temporary data collection.

Results

As shown in Figure 1, the non-happy group has a mean of 7.99 and a SD (standard deviation) of 2.81, while the happy group has a mean of 9.53 and a SD of 2.56. As indicated in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the skewness and kurtosis are within normal limits and suggest that the data have a normal distribution. The normal limits have been determined by considering that the statistic values for both the skewness and kurtosis are less than twice their respective standard errors. The skewness for the non-happy group is -0.152, with a standard error of 0.285 and the kurtosis is -0.592, with a standard error of 0.563. The skewness for the happy group is -0.485, with a standard error of 0.279 and the kurtosis is -0.073, with a standard error of 0.552.

The results of the Levene's test for Equality of Variances, displayed in Figure 3, show a value of 0.387 and a p value of 0.535. Because the p value is not less than the alpha level of 0.05, the homogeneity of variances is not statistically significant. This shows that the null hypothesis is rejected and it is deduced that all assumptions for parametric statistics are met.

As all assumptions for parametric statistics are met and the study used a between-group design, the results of the independent t-test displayed in Figure 3 were interpreted. The T-test's value was -3.454, with 143 degrees of freedom and a p value of 0.001 for a 2-tailed test. As the significance

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level is smaller than the alpha level of 0.05, the scores of the factor of Conscientiousness significantly differ between happy participants and non-happy participants. Figure 4 shows happy participants have a statistically significant higher level of Conscientiousness, comparative to the level of Conscientiousness the non-happy participants have.

Discussion

As predicted, there is a significant statistical difference between the scores of the factor of Conscientiousness for happy participants and non-happy participants. As the prediction is reflected in the results, this indicates that the study is valid and it also shows that the null hypothesis is rejected, as significantly higher scores of the factor of Conscientiousness have been recorded for the happy participants than the scores obtained for non-happy participants. The statistical difference of the current study has also been reflected in the study conducted by Chamorro-Premuzic et al (2007), which suggests that if even a partial replication of the original study illustrates the same findings, both studies are highly reliable.

In Figure 4 it is represented the difference of the scores of the Conscientiousness factor between happy and non-happy participants. The difference is clearly displayed and indicates that happy participants have a statistically significant higher level of Conscientiousness, comparative to the level of Conscientiousness the non-happy participants have.

Even though the results sustain the prediction, the study has its limitations. For example, these results show that happy students scored high on the factor of Conscientiousness, but the sample size may change the results. It

also has not been randomly selected from a population, as only the year one undergraduate Psychology students have been selected, so it cannot be assumed that if the participants would be randomly selected the same results will be obtained. Consequently, the results cannot be generalised as the sample size is unrepresentative. Future research should consider random selection of participants, representative of the population.

The study could be improved if the participants would be asked to complete the two questionnaires individually rather than while other participants are in the same room completing the same two questionnaires as the experimenters does not have full control over the accuracy of the responses, as there are still factors which can alter the input and consequently, the findings. Even if certain measures have been put in place to prevent participants influencing others' answers, as the number of participants is bigger than one, it is more difficult to suppress external factors such as the usage of mobile phones, internet and discussions between the participants.

The findings of this study and its critic evaluation can be used to inform future research which could examine the influence of happiness level on the trait of Conscientiousness and other traits considering more variables such as age, gender and geographical location, which could explain in more depth the findings discovered by this study.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1