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Personality type and romantic/interpersonal satisfaction

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Abstract

The present study analyzed the relationship between personality type according to the Big Five and satisfaction in both romantic and interpersonal relationships. Our sample were 81 participants from Boston University. There was no significant relationship between either neuroticism or extraversion and relationship satisfaction. Results found a negative correlation between extraversion and neuroticism. Participants in short term relationships presented to be more extraverted, while participants in long term relationships were more emotionally stable.

Introduction

In previous research, the satisfaction derived from romantic and interpersonal engagements played an important role in well-being and happiness (Natividade & Londero-Santos, 2021). Among the various factors, the effects of extraversion and neuroticism on relationship satisfaction are particularly important due to the roles these traits play in interpersonal interactions. In this study, we examined the relationship between personality traits—specifically neuroticism and extraversion—and relationship satisfaction in both romantic and friendship contexts. We hypothesize that individuals with higher levels of introversion will report higher satisfaction in their relationships and individuals with higher levels of neuroticism will be less satisfied with their relationships.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 81 BU students.

Materials

The questionnaire included questions about gender, age, and current relationship status, followed by the Big Five Inventory, satisfaction with romantic relationships, and friendship.

Procedures

Participants were required to complete a consent form before the questionnaire. The survey consists of three parts with 60 questions total. Participants who were not currently involved in a romantic relationship would automatically skip the questions about romantic relationship in the third part and proceed directly to the friendship-related questions. At the end, participants were debriefed about the study's purpose and questionnaire itself.

Results

A significant relationship was found between extraversion and neuroticism, $r(85) = -.30, p = .006$. No other significant relationships were found (see Table 1 for correlations).

An independent sample t-test was conducted to analyze the differences in personality traits and relationship satisfaction based on length of current romantic relationship. Individuals who were in a current romantic relationship for more than one year had higher emotional stability ($M = 28.19$) than those in a current romantic relationship for less than one year ($M = 23.76$), $t(42) = -2.69, p = .010, d = -.83$. Individuals in a current romantic relationship for less than one year had a significantly higher score in extraversion ($M = 24.47$) than those in a current romantic relationship for more than one year ($M = 20.59$), $t(42) = 2.42, p = .020, d = .75$. Individuals in a current romantic relationship for less than one year had a marginally significant higher score in friendship satisfaction ($M = 60.65$) than those in a current romantic relationship for more than one year ($M = 56.26$), $t(42) = 1.96, p = .057, d = .61$. No other differences were found (see Table 2 for means and standard deviations).

Table 1

Correlations for Personality Traits and Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Extraversion	Neuroticism	Relationship Satisfaction	Friendship Satisfaction
Total Extraversion	-	-	-	-
Total Neuroticism	-0.30**	-	-	-
Total Relationship Satisfaction	-0.06	0.18	-	-
Total Friendship Satisfaction	0.11	-0.15	0.10	-

Note. ** $p < 0.01$. Neuroticism scores were inverted, therefore higher scores indicate higher emotional stability.

Table 2

Means and SD by Length of Relationship

Variable	Current Relationship Less than 1 Year	Current Relationship More than 1 Year
Extraversion	24.47a (4.78)	20.59b (5.40)
Emotional Stability	23.76b (5.31)	28.19a (5.32)
Total Relationship Satisfaction	74.06 (8.76)	73.52 (8.16)
Total Friendship Satisfaction	60.65 (6.70)	56.26 (7.55)

Note. Means not sharing a subscript are significantly different at $p < .05$.

Discussion

Initially looking into our results, those who exhibited higher Extraversion exhibited lower Neuroticism. This aligns with previous literature done on the Big Five Personality Model as findings highlighted that the negative personality type of Neuroticism displays characteristics that do not align with the positive personality type of Extraversion. Higher Extraversion was found to be more prominent with individuals in a romantic relationship for less than 1 year than individuals in a relationship for more than 1 year. This finding may be because when a person is in a new relationship, they are less dependent on their romantic partner for social support, having other external resources when coping with stress other than their significant other (Amati et al., 2018; Cohen, 2004). Individuals in a current romantic relationship for more than one year felt more security and more emotional comfortability with their partners.

Limitations

- Due to the relatively small sample size, the findings may not be generalizable to larger populations.
- A lack of gender diversity as it primarily encompassed female-identifying persons, may limit the applicability of the findings to other gender groups.
- The study's narrow age range, confined to participants between the ages of 18-25, restricts the generalizability of the results across broader ages.
- Furthermore, the study exclusively recruited Boston University students, which introduce biases related to educational background and experiences.
- Lastly, the study did not explore potential differences in relationships based on the participants' sexual orientations. By not differentiating between heterosexual or same-sex romantic relationships, important nuances and dynamics within these relationships may have been overlooked.

Application/Implication

Based on the findings from our research, our results can be used to:

- Help implement better therapy interventions for individuals who struggle with emotional regulation and maintaining emotional stability. With the negative correlation between extraversion and neuroticism, individuals considered to be emotional unstable may have a less active and weaker social support.
- Further research can support therapy intervention in counseling individuals with poor emotional stability leading to higher life satisfaction and healthier relationships. Insights gained from this research and previous literature have the potential to benefit future understandings of the dimensions and dynamics of the quality of relationships and quality of life intertwined with personality types.