

BIG FIVE AND SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESSEmine GOCET-TEKIN, Ph.D.¹ & Seydi Ahmet SATICI²¹ Sakarya University, Foreign Languages Department, egocet@sakarya.edu.tr² Anadolu University, Educational Faculty, satici@anadolu.edu.tr**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between big five personality traits and subjective happiness. Participants were 369 university students (212 (57%) female, 157 (43%) male) aged between 18 and 30 years ($M_{age} = 21.48$, $SD_{age} = 1.55$) in Anadolu and Sakarya Universities, Turkey. The Adjective Based Personality Scale and Subjective Happiness Scale were used as measures. The correlation coefficient and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used in the current study to examine the relationship between big five personality traits and subjective happiness. Hierarchical regression results indicated that extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness were significantly positive predictors while neuroticism was a negative predictor of subjective happiness. Big five personality traits were found to account for the 36% of the subjective happiness variance collectively. Results were discussed in the light of relevant literature.

Keywords: Big Five; subjective happiness; multiple regression analysis

Happiness has become one of the most popular concepts in the field of positive psychology. Early studies mainly focused on identifying the external conditions that lead to happiness. But, when researchers in the field see that the external factors such as health, income, educational background, and marital status account for only a small amount of the variance in well-being measures (Diener, & Lucas, 1999), they have turned their attention towards understanding the relations between personality and happiness. There is a bunch of studies devoted themselves to explain what is happiness in the field of positive psychology (Diener, 2000; Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002; Lyubomirsky, 2001; Lyubomirsky, & Lepper, 1999; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) defined subjective well-being or happiness as a "phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction". Life satisfaction and domain satisfaction are considered cognitive components since they are based on evaluative beliefs about one's life. But, positive affect and negative affect assess the affective component of subjective well-being, reflecting the amount of pleasant and unpleasant feelings that people experience in their lives. On the other hand, subjective happiness is a more global, subjective assessment of whether one is a happy or an unhappy person (Lyubomirsky, & Lepper, 1999). The question why some people conceivably appraising themselves as happy, despite having only a somewhat happy life; while others identify themselves as unhappy, despite having experienced a number of positive emotions leads the researchers to consider the importance of subjective processes in happiness.

Personality traits are the enduring tendencies a person has to feel, think, and act in certain ways. These tendencies are known to be genetically determined and present at birth (Buss, & Plomin, 1984). The Big Five is the best accepted and most commonly used model of personality traits in the field of psychology. The five-factor model is comprised of five personality dimensions (OCEAN): Openness to Experience - a person's degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity, and preference for novelty and variety, Conscientiousness – the tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement, Extraversion- energy, positive emotions, assertiveness, sociability, talkativeness, and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, Agreeableness- the tendency to be compassionate and cooperative towards others rather than suspicious and antagonistic and Neuroticism- vulnerability to unpleasant emotions like anger, anxiety or depression.

Various studies investigating the relation of personality traits to happiness have yielded consistent findings. Extraversion and neuroticism have been constantly found to be the strongest predictors of happiness (e.g. Costa, & McCrae, 1980; Diener, & Lucas, 1999; Schimmack, Diener, & Oishi, 2002). Individuals who are more extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable were reported to experience greater satisfaction with life, more frequent positive affect, and less frequent negative affect (DeNeve, & Cooper, 1998; Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008).

Whereas previous research have examined the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and happiness under the umbrella of the subjective well-being, the present research sought to investigate this relationship using a measure of overall subjective happiness which is a global, subjective assessment of whether one is a happy or unhappy person. In this study it was hypothesized that Extraversion would be positively correlated while Neuroticism would be negatively correlated with happiness, and that Big five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience) would be a positive predictor of happiness and that this relationship would remain statistically significant after controlling for the effects of gender.

Method

Research Design

The present study used self-administered measures and is a quantitative research that depend on descriptive-correlational design. Additionally, this study was structured to examine the relationships between the big five personality traits and subjective happiness as a cross-sectional design which provides information about the current condition of the population.

Participants

Participants consisted of 369 university students (212 (57%) women, 157 (43%) men) aged between 18 and 30 years ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.48$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.55$) in Anadolu and Sakarya Universities, Turkey. Of the participants, 93 (25%) were freshman, 93 (25%) were sophomores, 91 (25%) were juniors, and 92 (25%) were seniors.

Measures

Adjective Based Personality Scale (ABPT; Bacanlı, İlhan, & Aslan, 2009). ABPT is composed of a list adjectives which contains a total of 40 items with opposite adjective pairs (e.g., Selfish vs Altruistic). ABPT is comprised of five sub dimensions (extroversion, emotional stability/neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experiences). Analyses have showed that the big five theory explains 52.63% of the variance in ABPT. The internal consistency coefficients were .80, .88, .89, .87, and .73 and the test-retest reliability coefficients were .68, .71, .85, .86, and .85, for five dimensions, respectively.

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS, Lyubomirsky, & Lepper 1999). The SHS consists of four items and each item is scored on a 1–7 scale that ranges from very unhappy to very happy. A sum of all score yields a total score ranges from 4 to 28 and higher score indicated that higher subjective happiness level. Turkish adaptation of this scale had been done by Akın and Satici (2011). According to confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the scale was well fit (RMSEA = .000, NFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, GFI = 1.00, AGFI = .99, and SRMR=.015). The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was .86 (Akın, & Satici, 2011).

Procedure

Participants completed the instruments approximately 15 minutes. All the participants have participated voluntarily and were free to fill out the data set. Researchers encouraged participants to remark their own affects and ideas and to keep their answers confidential. Questionnaires were completed anonymously and confidentiality was guaranteed. The questionnaires were administered to the students in the classroom environment.

Convenience sampling was used for selecting participants. The instruments were counterbalanced in each 50 administration to counterbalance. The correlation coefficient and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used in the current study to examine the relationship

between big five personality traits and subjective happiness. Gender was controlled for confounding.

Results

Firstly, basic descriptive statistics for all study variables were calculated. Mean scores indicate that the participants tended to exhibit a relatively high level of subjective happiness ($M = 18.75, SD = 3.30$), consciousness ($M = 36.71, SD = 6.76$), and agreeableness ($M = 48.36, SD = 8.21$). Besides, it can be said that means scores of participants display moderate level of openness ($M = 41.46, SD = 6.75$), extraversion ($M = 45.19, SD = 8.96$), and neuroticism ($M = 24.71, SD = 6.11$). In Table 1, the zero-order inter-correlations among study variables.

Table 1
Correlations among study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Subjective happiness					
2. Openness	.48**				
95%CI	(.40, .55)				
3. Consciousness	.39**	.47**			
95%CI	(.30, .47)	(.39, .55)			
4. Extraversion	.55**	.64**	.49**		
95%CI	(.47, .62)	(.58, .69)	(.41, .56)		
5. Agreeableness	.39**	.51**	.41**	.41**	
95%CI	(.30, .47)	(.43, .58)	(.32, .49)	(.32, .49)	
6. Neuroticism	-.21**	-.12*	-.13*	-.13*	-.17**
95%CI	(-.31, -.11)	(-.22, -.02)	(-.23, -.03)	(-.23, -.03)	(-.27, -.07)

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 1, presents the correlational relations among study variables. Subjective happiness was positively correlated with openness, $r_{(369)} = .48$, 95% C.I. [.40, .55], consciousness, $r_{(369)} = .39$, 95% C.I. [.30, .47], extraversion, $r_{(369)} = .55$, 95% C.I. [.47, .62], and agreeableness, $r_{(369)} = .39$, 95% C.I. [.30, .47]. On the other side, subjective happiness was negatively correlated with neuroticism, $r_{(369)} = -.21$, 95% C.I. [-.31, -.11].

Multiple Regression Analysis

Prior to analysis, assumptions were checked (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, independence of residuals). Normal distribution of variables were checked by skewness (ranged from -.77 to .27) and kurtosis (ranged from -.33 to 1.00) values. In order to check multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF; ranged from 1.03 to 2.01) and tolerance values (ranged from .50 to .97) were checked. Independence of residuals assumption detected from Durbin-Watson value, 1.78 indicates that there is no autocorrelation. The hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted with subjective happiness as dependent variable, big five personality traits as independent variables, and gender as control variable (Table 2).

	Model 5		Model 6		t
	β	t	B	SE	
	.08	1.91	.52	.28	1.86
	.39	7.09**	.13	.02	6.46**
	.13	2.74**	.05	.02	2.38*
	-.13	-3.03**	-.07	.02	-2.94**
	.14	2.34**	.06	.03	2.07*
			.04	.02	1.68**
	.364				.367
	.364				.367
	2.63				2.63
	43.06 (5.363)				36.53 (6.362)

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4				
	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t		
Gender	.87	.35	2.51*	.61	.289	2.12*	.50	.284	1.78	.59	.283	2.08*	.54	.282
Extraversion				.20	.016	12.64**	.17	.017	10.15**	.17	.017	10.02**	.14	.02
Agreeableness							.08	.019	4.15**	.07	.019	3.74**	.05	.02
Neuroticism										-.07	.023	-3.05**	-.07	.023
Openness													.07	.029
Conscientiousness														
R ²			.017			.316			.341			.356		
Adj R ²			.014			.312			.341			.356		
SE			3.28			2.74			2.68			2.65		
F _(dfn, dfd)			6.28 (1, 367)			84.43 (2, 366)			64.52 (3, 365)			51.81 (4, 364)		

Discussion

The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between big five personality traits and subjective happiness among university students in Turkey. Results of different researches indicated the existence of a positive and negative correlation between happiness and the five-personality factors. Consistent with previous studies in the field, results of this study revealed that Subjective happiness was positively correlated with openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness; while it was negatively correlated with neuroticism (Costa, & McCrae, 1980; Costa et al., 1987; Emmons, & Diener, 1985; McCrae, & Costa, 1991). The result of regression analysis indicated that extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness were significant positive predictors while neuroticism was a negative predictor of subjective happiness.

Prior findings have shown that concurrent neuroticism is a predictor of happiness (Argyle, & Lu, 1990; DeNeve, 1999; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004). Neurotic people

generally tend to experience negative feelings, depression, hostility and guilt (Watson, 2000). Negative relations between neuroticism and happiness can be explained by this general way of experiencing negativity among neurotics. On the other hand, individuals who are more extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable tend to experience greater satisfaction with life, more frequent positive affect, and less frequent negative affect (DeNeve, & Cooper, 1998; Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008). Highly extraverted individuals tend to experience higher levels of positive affect, and have stronger affective responses to positive events. (Furnham, & Cheng, 1999; Hayes, & Jopseph, 2003; Larsen, & Ketelaar, 1991). Having close relationships with others, engaging in rewarding social activities, experiencing more affection and enjoying greater social support can explain the positive correlation between extraversion and happiness. Similarly, highly agreeable individuals tend to engage in more prosocial behaviors, such as cooperating with others, expressing compassion and support for others, and treating others with politeness and respect (Graziano, & Tobin, 2009). As a result, agreeable individuals tend to be more successful in establishing stable and satisfying relationships (Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2002). Likewise, highly conscientious individuals tend to follow rules and norms, and are better able to organize things, complete tasks, and work toward long-term goals which ultimately lead them to be successful individuals. Similarly, highly open individuals tend to have a broad range of interests, and enjoy learning and trying new things. These positive personal and social outcomes may contribute to the positive association between extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and happiness.

Several limitations of this study should be considered with the results. First, it needs to be pointed out that the present study was a cross-sectional design in nature. Thus, further studies are needed to utilize prospective and longitudinal approaches to determine the causal relationships between study variables. Second, the study relied on a Turkish university student sample. Third, future research is needed to examine other possible intervening variables in the relations between personality and subjective happiness. Finally, the data were collected through self-report scales. Future studies should integrate multiple assessment methods to strengthen the validity of the findings.

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