

Personality Correlates of Optimism among Couples

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationship between optimism and personality traits (extraversion-introversion, emotional stability-neuroticism and psychoticism) among couples. The study sample consisted of 30 couples, N=60 (30 males and 30 females) with age ranging from 22 to 28 years were selected from the various places of Delhi NCR. For assessing personality traits, Eysenck Personality Inventory-Revised (EPI-R) by Hans Eysenck was employed and for assessing optimism, Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) developed by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994) was used. Results of the present study were analysed using Pearson-r correlation and t test. Results of study revealed that: there is a significant positive correlation between optimism and extraversion (personality traits), ($r=.368$) and no significant correlation between any other constructs of personality and optimism. Also, there is no significant difference found between male and female on any of the personality traits (extraversion, ($t=.912$); neuroticism, ($t=-.134$); and psychoticism, ($t=-.423$)) and optimism, ($t=1.548$). The study has important implications for intervention programs.

Keywords: *Personality, Optimism and Couples.*

The word “*persona*”, from which the term personality has been derived, is used in various senses, most of these popular meanings fall under one of two headings. The first usage equates the term to social skill or adroitness. An individual’s personality is assessed by the effectiveness which he is able to elicit positive reactions from a variety of persons under different circumstances, (Hall and Lindsey, 1981).

The deficiencies in the early definitions led to attempts to define personality in such a way as to include its motivational aspect as well as some of its other outstanding characteristics. According to Allport (1962), “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those

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psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thought” (Hall and Lindzey, 1981)

Eysenck’s theory is based primarily on physiology and genetics. Although he is a behaviorist who considers learned habits of great importance, he considers personality differences as growing out of our genetic inheritance. He is, therefore, primarily interested in what is usually called temperament, (Boeree, 2006).

DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY

We have seen that Eysenck and Cattell arrived at a different number of personality dimensions because they worked at different levels of factoring. Cattell’s 35 traits are all at the third level of the hierarchical structure, whereas Eysenck’s super factors are at the fourth level. (Boeree, 2006). Eysenck, however, extracted only three general super factors. His three personality dimensions are extraversion (E), neuroticism (N), and psychoticism (P), although he did not rule out “the possibility that further dimensions may be added later” (Eysenck, 1994). He developed a model of personality based upon just three universal traits, which are as follows: (Cherry, 2016)

Introversion/Extraversion:

Introversion involves directing attention on inner experiences, while extraversion relates to focusing attention outward on other people and the environment. So, a person high in introversion might be quiet and reserved, while an individual high in extraversion might be sociable and outgoing.

Neuroticism/Emotional Stability:

This dimension of Eysenck’s trait theory is related to moodiness versus even-temperateness. Neuroticism refers to an individual’s tendency to become upset or emotional, while stability refers to the tendency to remain emotionally constant.

Psychoticism:

Later, after studying individuals suffering from mental illness, Eysenck added a personality dimension he called psychoticism to his trait theory. Individuals who are high on this trait tend to have difficulty dealing with reality and may be antisocial, hostile, non-empathetic and manipulative.

Optimism

Optimism is used to denote a positive attitude or disposition that good things will happen independent of one’s ability. (Brissette, Scheier, & Carver, 2002). Optimism has been shown to be correlated with personality in various studies. Ideology convinced optimists may define failures in their hoped for outcomes by discussing “misplaced optimism” rather than abandoning

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optimism altogether, Baumgardner, Steve and Crothers (2009). Being optimistic means one expects the best possible outcome from any given situation.

Optimism refers to “the conviction that future holds desirable outcomes irrespective of one’s personal ability to control those outcomes”. Scheier & Carver (1985) define optimism, “as opposed to bad, outcome will generally occur when confronted with problem across important life domains. However, research makes it clear that people do vary in their overall level of optimism/pessimism. Studies also show that positive and negative expectations about the future show a consistent pattern of relatedness to measures of well-being.

Optimism as a behavioural construct is intimately related to many of the domains of human functioning. Tiger (1979) consider optimism to be an emotion; it seems to be more of an explanatory style than an emotion. He also defines it as a “mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future, one which the evaluator regards as socially desirable to his/her own advantage or his/her pleasure”.

Optimism’ is a rather ill-defined term that has been used to describe a range of different experiences, feelings and dispositions in various social and historical contexts. It appears, for example, as a theme in Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759) where the character Dr Pangloss exhibits an essentially flawed and naïve or ‘blind’ optimism. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the American author Eleanor Hodgman Porter created another emblematically optimistic character in the guise of Pollyanna – a term now commonly used in the English language to refer to people of an overly-positive and cheery disposition. (SIRC, 2009)

More recently, Terry Jones’ *The Life of Brian* (1979) has provided yet another – if slightly more ironic and surreal – example of how looking on the brighter side of life features ambiguously as both an admirable quality and as a source of personal failure. There are other examples from history, philosophy, politics, literature, film, music and popular culture where optimism serves as the principal theme. (SIRC, 2009)

The Psychology Of Optimism

Perhaps more than any other discipline, psychology has dominated the study of optimism, being understood as an aspect of cognition (how one’s mind works, or how one thinks) and as part of one’s personality. Psychologists of the early twentieth century initially discouraged ‘looking on the bright side’ in favour of a more measured, if slightly gloomier and pragmatic outlook on the world. Similarly, therapists encouraged patients to think realistically, shunning the idea that optimistic thinking in itself could lead to positive outcomes. In the second half of the twentieth century, in contrast, an increasingly large body of psychological research related to optimism and mental health began to move away from this negative perspective, instead focusing on the

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positive impact of optimism for well-being in many different aspects of life – from mental and physical health to job satisfaction and emotional balance (SIRC, 2009).

A study conducted by Mahasneh, Al-Zoubi and Batayeneh (2013), aimed to examine the correlation between optimism-pessimism and personality traits (extroversion, introversion, emotional stability and neuroticism), also aimed to identify the prevalence of optimism and pessimism in the study sample according to the variable sex, academic specialization, level of study, and grade point average. The study sample consisted of undergraduate students from the University. The result of study revealed a positive correlation relationship and statistically significant between optimism and introversion. Statistically significant positive relationship also existed between pessimism, emotional equilibrium and the pessimism emotion. Another study was conducted by Girol and Kerimgil (2010) on Academic Optimism according to them, academic optimism depends on positive psychology whose foundation based on scientific research contributing to the general wellness of public and struggling to understand the individual traits. The three properties of academic optimism have interacted each other. Academic optimism, being one of these features, triggers student achievement by carrying students learning to the top level. Collective efficacy reflects the thoughts and beliefs of the group. In conclusion, despite the socio-economic status of the students, the triplet structure of academic optimism affects student achievement in a positive way.

Srivastava and Angelo (2009), conducted the study on Optimism , effects on Relationship on normal population .It was concluded that optimism brings about positive outcomes in relationships by promoting favourable expectancies , which in turn cause individuals to pursue their relationship goals more flexible and persistently. Vandergrief (2007) conducted a study on Optimism associations with well-being indicators among older people in U.S. The sample was older people over age 65. The purpose was to provide social workers a better understanding of the function of well-being, particularly optimism among older people. It was concluded that a person's view of their health associates with optimism baseline scores, can influence change in optimisms score overtime and can predict future optimism scores. O'Connor and Casidy (2006) conducted a study on a University students sample aimed to identify the predictability of feeling despair through interaction between optimism and pessimism and a definite number of the future expectations of the individual. The study concluded that despair prediction is possible through the knowledge of individual's level of optimism and pessimism.

Interesting results were found by Brissette, Scheier and Carver (2002) in their study which was conducted on the role of optimism in creating the social network among the University students , concluded that enjoying optimism contributes to the increase of creating social network with the individuals and their achieving higher levels of psychological adjustment than the pessimistic individuals. Researchers from Afghanistan have tried to determine the role of Optimism in Psychological Wellbeing, like Ismail (2001) conducted a study aimed at prediction in optimism

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and pessimism through certain variables, represented in feeling psychological loneliness, control direction, death worry, economic and social condition. The most predictable variables of optimism were feeling loneliness, control direction, death worry and economical and social condition, respectively. On the other hand, the most predictable variables of pessimism were the same.

In a study Yates (2000) conducted on the preparatory and secondary stages students and aimed to know the relationship between optimism-pessimism and each of academic achievement and grade level; and to know the difference between the two genders in optimism-pessimism. The study concluded that there are statistically significant differences between optimism and pessimism attributed to the gender. In this concern, males were more pessimistic than females throughout the study years. The study further found statistically significant difference in optimism and pessimism attributed to the grade level, and a negative relationship between optimism and academic achievement.

On the basis of above literatures following objectives were formed:

- To assess the personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism) and optimism.
- To explore the relationship between and personality traits and optimism.
- To explore the difference between the male and females on personality traits and optimism.

On the basis of the above objectives following hypotheses were formed:

- There would be significant correlation between optimism and personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism) among unmarried couples.
- There would be significant differences between the male and female on optimism and personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism).

METHOD

Participants:

A total of 60 subjects (30 couples) (N=60) age ranging from 20 to 26 years, were contacted for the present study. And they were further divided on the basis of gender male (n=30) and female (n=30). Sample was collected from the different places of Delhi NCR.

Tools:

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised: The EPQ-R was used to assess the personality traits of the participants. . The questionnaire consisted of 90 items, covering 3 major dimensions of personality- Extroversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism and containing a Lie scale. The reliability results of EPQ-R are quite favourable, with reliabilities mostly lying in the .80 to .90 region. The EPQ-R has established validity.

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Life Orientation Test- Revised: LOT-R is the revised version of LOT. The LOT-R is validated by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994). The test-retest correlation of LOT-R is .68 to .79 for intervals of 4 to 28 months.

Procedure:

For the purpose of proposed research data was collected from different places of Delhi NCR. After rapport formation all required scales with instructions were administered on all the participants. The participants were informed that the information collected from them will be kept confidential and will be used only for the study of research purposes. The participants were asked to fill the questionnaires of Eysenk Personality Questionnaire and Life Orientation Test.

Statistical Analysis:

Pearson r Product moment correlation and *t*-test has been used to analyse the data for the present study.

RESULT

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Optimism	16.9500	3.79752	60
Extraversion	6.0333	1.69712	60
Neuroticism	5.3333	1.91042	60
Psychoticism	6.9833	2.11926	60

Table 2: Correlation among Optimism and Personality traits (Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism)

	Optimism	Extraversion	Neuroticism	Psychoticism
Optimism	1	.368**	-.100	.095
Extraversion		1	.415**	.203
Neuroticism			1	-.028
Psychoticism				1

** Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 2 indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between optimism and extraversion (personality traits), ($r=.368$); and extraversion (personality traits) and neuroticism (personality traits), ($r=.415$). The results have depicted that the more the extravert a person is, the more the optimistic he would be. Furthermore, the results have also revealed that a person high on extraversion would also be high on neuroticism.

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There is no significant correlation between any other constructs of personality and optimism.

Table 3: t- value between male and female on optimism and personality traits (Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism)

Variable		Group (Gender)	Mean	S.D	T	Sig. value
Optimism		Male	17.7000	3.75224	1.548	.127
		Female	16.2000	3.75454		
Personality	Extraversion	Male	6.2333	1.79431	.912	.366
		Female	5.8333	1.59921		
	Neuroticism	Male	5.3000	2.18380	-.134	.894
		Female	5.3667	1.62912		
	Psychoticism	Male	6.8667	2.16131	-.423	.674
		Female	7.1000	2.10664		

Table 3 have shown that there is no significant difference found between male and female on any of the personality traits (extraversion, (t=.912); neuroticism, (t=-.134); and psychoticism, (t=-.423).) and optimism, (t=1.548).

DISCUSSION

It was hypothesized that there would be significant positive relationship between optimism and personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism), Thus, the hypothesis which stated that ' There would be significant correlation between optimism and personality among unmarried couples is partially accepted.

The above finding can be supported from the study by Abdel Latif, Hamada (1998) and Ansari (2003) which revealed a positive correlation among optimism, extroversion and neuroticism for males. The result of the present investigation is also in parallel with the study of Sharpe, Martin and Roth (2011), whose results indicated strong positive relationships between optimism and four of the Big Five factors of personality: Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

Also the present finding is inlined with the findings of Segerstrom, Castañeda, and Spencer (2003), who assessed optimism using the LOT-R and a measure of academic optimism and, in addition to the typical significant relationships with Neuroticism and Extraversion, obtained strong positive correlations with Conscientiousness as measured by the NEO-PI-R.

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It was also hypothesized that, there would be a significant difference between the males and females on personality traits and optimism has been rejected as no significant differences were found on the gender basis. The above finding can be supported by the study of Barakat (1998), which concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in optimism and personality on the basis of gender.

Also, as interviewed with some of the participants of the present study, it has been observed that the couples had better understanding and also very much supportive for each other, which may be the reason for no significant gender differences in the findings of the present study.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the findings of the present investigation illustrated that there is a significant positive correlation between optimism and extraversion (personality traits); and extraversion (personality traits) and neuroticism (personality traits). Furthermore, there is no significant difference found between male and female on any of the personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) and optimism. Although the present study is not free from limitations in terms of sample size and many more, it can be used as the basis for many other future researches. The outcome of the present study can also be implemented in intervention programs intended for personality growth of the couples.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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