



## The contributions of personality and emotional intelligence to resiliency

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### ABSTRACT

Two studies report on the contribution of emotional intelligence to self-reported resiliency beyond that accounted for by the three most often cited contemporary personality trait models. The Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (RYSA), Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF), Big Five Questionnaire (BFQ), Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP), the HEXACO-60, and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised Short Form (EPQ-RS) were administered to 186 Italian university students and 189 Italian adult workers. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that EI accounted for additional variance in resiliency beyond that offered by each of the four personality trait models for both samples.

### 1. Introduction

Young adults are faced with many challenges in the transition from adolescence to adulthood that vary from attending university or entering the world of work to changes in relationships and planning for the future (Prince-Embury, Saklofske, & Nordstokke, 2017). Post-secondary education produces its own stressful experiences that may include managing increased independence and establishing new relationships to added pressures to achieve and choosing a career (Galatzer-Levy, Burton, & Bonanno, 2012; Stelnicki, Nordstokke, & Saklofske, 2015). Upon entering the work world, the rapid and uncertain changes and more frequent job and career transitions have resulted in additional stress in most all occupations (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2010). Resiliency can be considered as a key resource for managing the stress and strains of everyday life (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2015; Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2015; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014a, 2014b).

Personal resiliency describes the person's capacity to manage challenges and difficulties in all stages and areas of life and to 'bounce back' following adversity (Masten, 2001, 2014; Masten et al., 2004; Masten & Wright, 2009). Masten (2001, 2014) underscores that resiliency is based in fundamental systems of human functioning and represents an adaptive resource for individuals confronted with stressors and difficult situations. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) differentiate between personal resiliency (Block & Block, 1980; Block & Kremen, 1996), described as a personality characteristic, and resilience as a dynamic process of the interaction between individual characteristics and the environmental conditions (Masten, 2007, 2014).

While there are a number of definitions and scales that purport to measure resiliency (Prince-Embury, Saklofske, & Veseley, 2015), a more recent model that offers both an operational definition and measures of resilience and personal resiliency has been developed by Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, Prince-Embury and Saklofske (2013, 2014) and Prince-Embury et al. (2017). The model of personal resiliency (Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) underlying both the child/adolescent and adult scales is founded on previously identified aspects of personal experience associated with three core developmental systems: Sense of Mastery, Sense of Relatedness, and Emotional Reactivity. Sense of Mastery (Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) includes optimism, self-efficacy, and adaptability and can be considered a key protective resource of personal resiliency. Sense of Relatedness underscores the importance of relationships and relational ability and is comprised of trust, perceived access to support, and comfort with and tolerance of others; it is also described as a protective resource. Emotional Reactivity is defined as the rapidity and the strength of an individual's negative emotional response (Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981). The three functional aspects of emotional reactivity are sensitivity, length of recovery time from emotional upset, and impairment or degree of disrupted functioning related to emotional upset. In contrast to mastery and relatedness, emotional reactivity constitutes a vulnerability factor for individuals. This framework is reflected in the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA; Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) and has more recently been extended to the Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (Prince-Embury et al., 2017) for use with older adolescents and young adults.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a much studied and important

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individual differences construct within the positive psychology literature regardless of the theoretical framework (i.e., trait vs. ability) or the measure used to assess it (e.g., Stough, Saklofske, & Parker, 2009). As anticipated, a positive association has been reported between resilience assessed with the RSYA (Prince-Embury et al., 2017) and trait emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). In particular, the two protective factors correlated positively with trait EI whereas the vulnerability factor of emotional reactivity correlated negatively with EI (Prince-Embury et al., 2017). Furthermore, personality reflected in such contemporary trait models as Eysenck's (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) super 3, Costa and McCrae's (1992) Big 5 and Lee and Ashton's (2004) 6 factor HEXACO model have been extensively examined in relation to EI (e.g., Andrei, Siegling, Aloe, Baldaro, & Petrides, 2016; Petrides, Siegling, & Saklofske, 2016; Siegling, Vesely, Petrides, & Saklofske, 2015) although to a lesser extent with resiliency (Prince-Embury et al., 2017).

There is a robust and complex relationship between the various personality factors and EI that requires further analysis to determine the contribution of each in a description of resiliency. This is partially due to the fact that current personality measures do not necessarily assess exactly the same traits even though they are similarly labeled as conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness, and extraversion. Adding to this, it has been argued that EI and personality are highly correlated (Van der Linden, Tsaousis, & Petrides, 2012) and that EI should be regarded as a personality trait (Petrides et al., 2016; Petrides, Furnham, & Mavroveli, 2007). Thus it may be suggested that EI would not contribute substantially to predicting variance in related variables beyond personality, especially if using a scale such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue; Petrides, 2009) which also includes some facets that would seem to correlate or overlap with the RSYA model of resiliency (e.g., adaptability, emotion regulation). In particular, there have not been empirical studies to determine if trait emotional intelligence adds incremental variance beyond that accounted for by personality traits in relation to resiliency.

The two studies presented in this paper examine the relationships between resiliency and both personality traits and EI with samples of Italian university students (study 1) and Italian workers (study 2). Prince-Embury and Saklofske (2013) emphasize that personal resiliency is not a personality trait, assessed for example via the Big Five, but more a set of resources that may be influenced by personality traits. Here we hypothesized that trait EI will add incremental variance beyond that accounted for by different personality trait models.

## 2. Study 1 and study 2

### 2.1. Material and methods

#### 2.1.1. Participants

Participants in study 1 were 186 Italian university students (female: 56.45%; male: 43.55%; mean age = 23.18 years,  $SD = 4.08$ ; first year: 17.74%, second year: 35.48%, third year: 22.59%, fourth year: 12.90%, fifth year: 11.29%).

Study 2 participants were 189 Italian workers employed at different public and private organizations in the Tuscany region (female: 55.03%; males: 44.97%; mean age = 43.64 years,  $SD = 10.82$ ) and drawn from various occupations (managers: 13.76%; clerks: 45.50%; professionals such as educators and lawyers: 19.57%; blue collar workers: 21.17%) and education levels (master - university degree: 40.74%; high school diploma: 46.03%; middle school diploma: 13.23%).

In both studies, participants completed the Italian versions of the RSYA, the Big Five Questionnaire (BFQ), the Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP), the HEXACO-60, the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised Short Form (EPQ-RS), and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF).

#### 2.1.2. Measures

The Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (RSYA; Prince-Embury et al., 2017) contains 50 items that measure Sense of Relatedness, Mastery and Emotional Reactivity using a 5-point Likert scale. A single measure termed the Resiliency-Vulnerability Index (RVI) was used in this study (see Prince-Embury, 2013). The Italian version was developed by the first author following the standard translation-back translation procedures and validated in a separate study (Wilson et al., in press).

The *Big Five Questionnaire* (BFQ; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Borgogni, 1993) is composed of 132 items assessing the five major trait personality factors using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

The Italian version by Di Fabio and Saklofske (in press a) of the HEXACO-60 (Ashton & Lee, 2009) is composed of 60 items responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

The 20 item Italian version (Di Fabio and Saklofske, in press b) of the Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP, Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006) employs a 5 points response format.

The Italian version (Dazzi, Pedrabissi, & Santinello, 2004) of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised Short Form (EPQ-RS, Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985) includes 48 items with a Yes/No response format.

The Italian version (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2011) of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006) is composed of 30 items drawn from the 153 item TEIQue.

Means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for all scales are presented in Table 1.

#### 2.1.3. Procedure

The same procedure for administering the questionnaires was followed for both university students and workers. The questionnaires were group administered by trained psychologist and in accordance with Italian Privacy Law. The order of administration was counter-balanced to control the effects of presentation.

**Table 1**  
Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas - university students and workers.

	Study 1 university students <i>N</i> = 186			Study 2 workers <i>N</i> = 189		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
RSYA Resiliency-Vulnerability Index	4.86	4.44	0.86	5.56	4.71	0.87
BFQ Extraversion	75.71	9.25	0.73	76.04	16.60	0.77
BFQ Agreeableness	77.35	9.30	0.76	79.85	12.99	0.78
BFQ Conscientiousness	79.83	10.15	0.78	80.58	17.87	0.77
BFQ Emotional stability	68.76	11.82	0.84	73.66	22.81	0.89
BFQ Openness	80.41	9.62	0.73	78.74	22.81	0.79
MINI-IPIP Extraversion	11.53	2.56	0.71	11.72	3.25	0.71
MINI-IPIP Agreeableness	14.83	3.05	0.73	14.88	2.94	0.73
MINI-IPIP Conscientiousness	12.58	3.08	0.71	13.05	3.39	0.72
MINI-IPIP Neuroticism	11.51	3.14	0.72	10.86	4.00	0.72
MINI-IPIP Intellect imagination	14.46	3.23	0.72	13.55	3.07	0.73
HEXACO Honesty-Humility	32.72	5.99	0.76	36.56	6.15	0.72
HEXACO Emotionality	33.27	6.54	0.79	32.72	6.15	0.83
HEXACO Extraversion	31.99	6.06	0.77	33.22	6.30	0.75
HEXACO Agreeableness	30.26	5.27	0.75	31.92	7.05	0.72
HEXACO Conscientiousness	33.22	5.77	0.75	33.90	8.19	0.73
HEXACO Openness to Experience	34.45	6.17	0.76	32.38	8.43	0.77
EPQ Extraversion	7.77	2.97	0.76	7.56	3.21	0.83
EPQ Neuroticism	5.42	3.03	0.78	4.79	3.37	0.85
EPQ Psychoticism	3.55	2.30	0.72	3.22	2.09	0.72
TEIQue Total	139.53	22.17	0.89	139.77	22.95	0.85

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