International note: Temperament and character's relationship to subjective well-being in Salvadorian adolescents and young adults

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ABSTRACT

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The present study investigated the relationship between personality and Subjective Well-Being in a sample of 135 Salvadorian adolescents and young adults (age mean = 21.88 sd. = 4.70). Personality was assessed through self-reports using the Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised. Subjective Well-Being was also self-reported using the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule and the Satisfaction With Life Scale. Structural equation modeling was used to determine relationships between personality and Subjective Well-Being. Regarding temperament dimensions, Harm Avoidance was positively associated to negative affect and negatively associated to positive affect, while Persistence was positively associated to positive affect. Regarding character dimensions, only Self-directedness was related to Subjective Well-Being: positively related to life satisfaction and positive affect. The results presented here mirror findings using the temperament and character model of personality among European and North American adolescents.
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Research among European and North American adolescents suggests that personality is a major determinant of their Subjective Well-Being (e.g., Fogle, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2002; Huebner, 1991; Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, 2004). Personality can be defined as dynamic psychobiological internal system, composed of temperament and character dimensions, by which the individual shapes and adapts to internal and external changes or situations (Cloninger, 2004). Temperament appears to be a key element because it is related to reactivity to emotional stimuli, individual differences in intensity to responses to emotional events, and to the duration of emotional reactions (Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, & Diener, 2005). On the other hand, character is the individual's ability to accept the self, behave accordingly to her or his goals, show empathy, help others, and sense of self-efficacy, autonomy, and responsibility (for a detailed definition of temperament and character dimensions see Table S1 in the Supplemental Material online). In short, character can be defined as what individuals make of themselves intentionally or metacognitive strategies to guide one's behavior (Cloninger, 2004; Garcia, Anckarsäter & Lundström, 2013).

Using the Temperament and Character Inventory (Cloninger, Svrakic, & Przybeck, 1993) researchers have constantly found that Subjective Well-Being is related to two temperament dimensions (i.e., Harm Avoidance and Persistence) and to one

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Table 1

Correlations and reliability (*Cronbach's* α in bold type in diagonal) coefficients, means and standard deviations for all variables in the study for the whole sample ($N = 135$).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Positive affect (1)	**.73**	.02	.22*	.02	−.43**	.12	.51**	.26**	.12	.36**
Negative affect (2)		**.82**	−.29**	.15	.32**	.06	−.13	−.47**	−.22*	−.07
Life satisfaction (3)			**.78**	−.20*	−.31**	.19*	.38**	.59**	.36**	.26**
Novelty seeking (4)				**.71**	−.34**	.23**	−.18*	−.29**	−.11	.00
Harm avoidance (5)					**.83**	−.20*	−.40**	−.39**	−.29**	−.40**
Reward dependence (6)						**.81**	.14	.19*	.52**	.31**
Persistence (7)							**.83**	.40**	.23**	.49**
Self-directedness (8)								**.84**	.48**	.10
Cooperativeness (9)									**.73**	.33**
Self-transcendence (10)										**.81**
Mean	34.39	22.94	25.17	102.10	92.11	106.99	116.75	140.27	138.50	85.35
Sd.	5.72	6.57	5.67	13.84	16.56	15.09	16.19	18.95	13.48	14.42

Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

character dimension, namely Self-directedness (e.g., Cloninger, 2004, 2006; Cloninger, Zohar, Hirschmann, & Dahan, 2012; Garcia, 2011, 2012; Garcia, Kerekes, Andersson-Arntén, & Archer, 2012; Garcia, Kerekes, & Archer, 2012; Garcia & Moradi, 2012; Garcia, Lundström et al., 2013; Nima, Archer, & Garcia, 2012; Schütz, Archer, & Garcia, 2013). The current knowledge regarding these three personality dimensions suggests that being high in Persistence (i.e., being persevering, ambitious, perfectionistic) increases both positive and negative emotions. However, being high in Persistence reduces negative emotions and increases positive emotions if the individual is low in Harm Avoidance (i.e., low neurotic behavior) and Self-directedness (Cloninger et al., 2012). Self-directedness is a character dimension based on the concept of the self as an autonomous individual, which allows the individual to engage in purposeful actions because the individual has a "sense of following a meaningful direction in one's life" (Cloninger, 2004, p. 120). Accordingly, being high in Self-directedness increases the sense of being satisfied with life (Garcia, 2011; Schütz et al., 2013).

The present study analyzed the relationship between temperament and character to Subjective Well-Being in a sample of Salvadorian adolescents and young adults. With regard to Subjective Well-Being, Latin America is clearly an understudied part of the world (for a recent review showing that the majority of previous research in this area involves American participants see Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009). Nevertheless, research shows that cultures that are geographically near to each other tend to exhibit similarities in personality traits (Allik & McCrae, 2004) and their desirability of life satisfaction and view of positive and negative emotions (Diener & Suh, 2000). For example, as for North Americans and compared to Asians, Latin Americans seem to desire life satisfaction more and tend to put more importance to emotions such as pride. Suggesting that the sample used here might show similar relationships among variables to those found en earlier studies among Europeans and North Americans.

Method

Participants and procedure

The present study was based upon a sample of 135 participants (44 males, 91 females). The mean age for the males was 21.88 (*sd.* = 4.70), and 19.37 years (SD = 3.19) for the females (no other demographic information was collected). The participants were recruited from one University in San Salvador, El Salvador. All participants were informed that their participation was anonymous and voluntary.

Measures

Cloninger's psychobiological model of personality

The Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised comprises 240 items with a Likert scale (1 = *definitely false*, 5 = *definitely true*). The four temperament dimensions are: Novelty Seeking, Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence, and Persistence. The three Character dimensions: Self-Directedness, Cooperativeness, and Self-Transcendence.

Subjective well-being

Life satisfaction was measured by the Satisfaction With Life Scale (5 items with a 7-point Likert scale: 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; Pavot & Diener, 1993). Positive and negative affect were measured by the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule comprising 10 items in each scale with a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = *very slightly* to 5 = *extremely* (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

Analysis and data preparation

See the Supplemental Material online describing how the missing data and data imputation was handled. Structural equation modeling was used to determine relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables, using the AMOS