



Research report

The expression of affective temperaments in daily life

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ABSTRACT

Background: Numerous validation studies have examined the TEMPS-A in both clinical and nonclinical samples. However, the majority of these studies utilized cross-sectional assessments in laboratory or clinical settings. The present study is the first to examine the expression of affective temperaments in daily life using experience sampling methodology (ESM).

Methods: 138 participants completed the TEMPS-A and received a personalized digital assistant that signaled them eight times daily for one week to complete questionnaires that assessed affect, cognition, behavior, sense of self, and social interaction.

Results: As expected, cyclothymic/irritable temperament was positively associated with negative affect, risky behavior, and restlessness, and was negatively associated with positive affect and preference to be with others in daily life. In contrast, hyperthymic temperament was associated with positive affect, fullness of thought, doing many and exciting things, grandiosity, and preference to be with others in daily life. Dysthymic temperament was modestly associated with worry, and was positively associated with trouble concentrating, fullness of thought, and a preference for social contact. Cross-level interactions indicated that cyclothymic/irritable temperament was associated with elevated stress reactivity in daily life.

Limitations: ESM data collection was limited to one week. Longer assessment periods might better capture the cyclical nature of affective temperaments.

Conclusions: This was the first study to examine affective temperaments in daily life. The findings offer further validation of the TEMPS-A, as well as the maladaptive nature of the cyclothymic/irritable temperament.

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1. Affective temperaments

Although the notion of affective temperaments dates back to antiquity, Kraepelin (1899, 1921) was the first to organize affective temperaments under the label of manic-depressive insanity. However, unlike current conceptualizations of bipolar disorder, manic-depressive insanity represented a continuum of symptoms that included “recurrent melancholia, mania, as well as subsyndromal fluctuations of activity, mood, and cognition between affective episodes” (Akiskal, 1996, p. 55). Kraepelin posited that mood episodes arose from underlying affective temperaments in a cyclical nature. Specifically, Kraepelin suggested that affective temperaments occupy the intervals between mood episodes (Akiskal, 1996), but may also be present among individuals

without full-blown mood disorders. Building on the historical foundation of Greek and German predecessors, Akiskal and Mallya (1987) operationalized, modified, and enriched Kraepelin's formulations and specifically identified cyclothymic, dysthymic, and hyperthymic temperaments. Akiskal (2004) described hyperthymic temperament as characteristically upbeat and exuberant, with over-involvement in activities, high energy, confidence, and optimism, and less need for sleep. Dysthymic temperament was described as sensitive to criticism, self-blaming, and passive, whereas, cyclothymic temperament was characterized by frequent shifts in mood and energy. Among people exhibiting cyclothymic temperament, there appears to be an irritable subtype (Akiskal et al., 1979) characterized as critical, complaining, dissatisfied, and angry (Akiskal, 2004).

Numerous validation studies have examined affective temperaments in patients with mood psychopathology. Several studies have found higher rates of cyclothymic and irritable temperaments (Di Florio et al., 2010; Dolenc, 2010; Savitz et al., 2008; Evans et al.,

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2005; Mendlowicz et al., 2005; Kesebir et al., 2005; Nowakowska et al., 2005), as well as dysthymic temperament (Evans et al., 2005; Mendlowicz et al., 2005; Nowakowska et al., 2005; Matsumoto et al., 2005) in patients with bipolar disorders in comparison to healthy control participants. Similarly, Goto et al. (2011) found elevated rates of cyclothymic, irritable, and dysthymic temperaments in patients with bipolar spectrum disorders, in comparison to depressed patients. Two studies have reported associations between cyclothymic temperament and clinical markers of bipolarity (Maina et al., 2010; Mechri et al., 2011). Research generally has not supported elevated rates of hyperthymic temperament in bipolar samples in comparison to healthy participants (Evans et al., 2005; Savitz et al., 2008; Mendlowicz et al., 2005; Nowakowska et al., 2005), although one study (Kesebir et al., 2005) reported this trend. Two studies reported higher rates of hyperthymic temperament in bipolar patients in comparison to depressed patients (Mazzarini et al., 2009; Gassab et al., 2008). Recently, Perugi et al. (2012) reported that affective temperaments may also influence the clinical features and course of bipolar psychopathology.

Recent work has also examined associations of affective temperaments in nonclinical samples. Maremmani et al. (2011) examined the relation of affective temperaments with affective state following a stressor in candidates for the Italian Air Force. Hyperthymic temperament was associated with feeling calm and peaceful following the stressor, and was negatively associated with feeling anxious. Conversely, cyclothymic temperament was positively associated with feeling anxious and agitated, and was negatively associated with feeling calm after the stressor. Irritable temperament was negatively associated with feeling well and peaceful, and dysthymic temperament was not associated with any measures of affect. Morvan et al. (2011) examined the relation of affective temperaments with self-report measures of anxiety and depressive symptoms in a large sample of undergraduate students. Cyclothymic, irritable, and dysthymic temperaments were associated with depressive and anxiety symptoms, whereas hyperthymic temperament was inversely associated with depressive symptoms. Similarly, Lazary et al. (2009) found that cyclothymic, irritable, and dysthymic temperaments were positively associated with current depressive symptoms in a nonclinical sample of Hungarian adults, and found an inverse association between hyperthymic temperament and depressive symptoms. Recently, Walsh et al. (2012a) reported that combined cyclothymic/irritable temperament was associated with bipolar disorders, borderline personality traits, and impairment in a nonclinically ascertained sample of young adults.

Overall, this body of research supports the construct validity of affective temperaments. However, this research has largely been limited to cross-sectional assessments in laboratory or clinical settings. Thus, there is a paucity of research examining the cognitive, affective, and behavioral expression of affective temperaments in daily life.

1.1. Experience sampling methodology

In order to better understand the impact and expression of psychological phenomena in daily life, researchers have employed experience sampling methodology (ESM) (e.g., Myin-Germeys et al., 2003a). ESM is a widely used, within-day self-assessment technique in which participants are prompted at random intervals to complete brief questionnaires. ESM has been increasingly used in clinical and social psychology research and offers several powerful advantages to traditional data collection procedures (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1987; deVries, 1992; Reis and Gable, 2000). Specifically, ESM: (1) repeatedly assesses participants in their normal daily environment, thereby enhancing ecological validity; (2) assesses the participants' experiences

at the time of the signal (or in the moment), thereby minimizing retrospective bias; (3) allows for an examination of the context of participants' experiences; and (4) allows for the use of sophisticated multilevel modeling.

1.2. Expression of bipolar psychopathology in daily life

Although no research has examined the expression of affective temperaments in daily life, a few studies have assessed bipolar psychopathology in daily life using ESM. Recently, Kwapil et al. (2011) examined the expression of bipolar spectrum psychopathology (as measured by the Hypomanic Personality Scale; Eckblad and Chapman, 1986) in daily life using ESM in a sample of nonclinically ascertained young adults. They found that high scores on the scale were associated with elevated euphoria, energy, dysphoria, irritability, racing thoughts, overconfidence/grandiosity, and risky behavior in daily life. Walsh et al. (2012b) confirmed these findings in an independent sample of young adults. Havermans et al. (2010) examined reactivity to daily hassles and uplifts in a sample of outpatients with remitted bipolar disorder and a control group. They found that bipolar patients had elevated levels of negative affect, and lower positive affect, in comparison to control participants, and found no overall differences in reactivity of negative affect and positive affect to hassles and uplifts. However, the authors reported that bipolar patients with subsyndromal depressive symptoms were more reactive to daily hassles, and perceived them as more stressful, than controls. These findings are consistent with an earlier ESM study in remitted bipolar patients (Havermans et al., 2007) that found that the stressfulness of negative events was positively related to both depression scores and the number of previous episodes of depression. Specifically, individuals who had more than four past episodes of depression experienced negative events as more stressful. Myin-Germeys et al. (2003b) assessed emotional reactivity to daily stress in a group of individuals with non-affective psychosis, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorder. Results of the study indicated that individuals with major depression and non-affective psychosis experienced increased negative affect in response to stress. Furthermore, individuals with bipolar disorder and non-affective psychosis experienced a decrease in positive affect in relation to stressful situations. Taken together, this research suggests that ESM offers a useful approach for examining experiences in daily life in patients with mood psychopathology and psychosis. The present research extends this approach in a new direction to assess the relation of affective temperaments with daily life experiences.

1.3. Goals and hypotheses

The goal of the present study was to examine the expression of affective temperaments in daily life in a large sample of non-clinically ascertained young adults that includes participants psychometrically identified as at-risk for bipolar spectrum psychopathology. Specifically, the study examined the association of affective temperaments with measures of affect, cognition, behavior, sense of self, and social interactions. It was hypothesized that hyperthymic temperament would be associated with positive affect, fullness of thought, participating in multiple, exciting activities, and confidence/grandiosity in the moment. In contrast, it was hypothesized that cyclothymic/irritable temperament would be associated with negative affect, cognitive difficulties, and engaging in risky behavior. Finally, it was hypothesized that dysthymic temperament would be associated with decreased positive affect, increased negative affect (specifically sadness and worry), cognitive impairment, and decreased confidence/grandiosity.

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