



The resilient, the restraint and the restless: Personality types based on the Alternative Five-Factor Model



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ABSTRACT

Using data from two samples and > 1000 participants (drawn from the general population), the present research investigated personality types based on the Alternative Five-Factor Model (AFFM). Study 1 ($n = 774$) identified three personality prototypes (using cluster analysis) and provided support for their internal validity, using a double-cross validation approach. The three identified types were labeled *resilient* (low Neuroticism-Anxiety and Aggression-Hostility, high Sociability and Activity, and an average level of Impulsive Sensation Seeking), *overcontrolled* (high Neuroticism-Anxiety, average Aggression-Hostility and low levels of the other factors) and *strain* (average level of Activity and high levels of the other factors). Study 2 ($n = 332$) provided evidence for the external validity of the identified personality types, by revealing several differences between them in terms of self-reported behavioral preferences. These findings were discussed and compared with research on personality types based on the Five-Factor Model, with several similarities emerging.

1. Introduction

Imagine asking a Psychology graduate student from anywhere around the world to describe their personality. As (most likely) they have learnt about the Five-Factor Model (FFM; McCrae & Costa, 1987), they would probably list several personality factors with their plus/minus poles (e.g. C+, E+, N-, A+, O+). This is an everyday-life example of the fact that, for at least the last four or five decades, the main approach to personality research was the variable-centered one (Asendorpf, 2002; Asendorpf & Van Aken, 1999). A different approach (that gained ground in the late 90s) was the person-centered approach, whose primary focus was on the patterning and organization of traits within a person (Herzberg & Roth, 2006; Mervielde & Asendorpf, 2000). This orientation described personality prototypes to which several personality profiles show the highest degree of correspondence with (Rammstedt, Riemann, Angleitner, & Borkenau, 2004). For some, this was the beginning of the personality traits vs. types debate.

The idea of comparing the two approaches to personality has been tackled before. In terms of temporal stability, there is strong evidence that personality traits are susceptible to change across the entire lifespan (e.g. Specht, Egloff, & Schmukle, 2011; Wortman, Lucas, & Donnellan, 2012). In contrast, there is evidence that personality types are consistent both across adolescence (Meeus, Van de Schoot, Klimstra, & Branje, 2011) and adulthood (Specht, Luhmann, & Geiser, 2014). In terms of predictive power of the trait vs. type approach, some favored

the former one (Costa Jr, Herbst, McCrae, Samuels, & Ozer, 2002) while some identified similar predictive potential for both approaches (Asendorpf & Denissen, 2006; Huey Jr & Weisz, 1997). Furthermore, some authors argued that the type approach would be more appropriate for predicting longitudinal outcomes (rather than concurrent ones), because of less temporal variability in comparison to personality traits (Asendorpf & Denissen, 2006).

When talking about personality types, probably one of the first classifications that comes to mind is Block and Block (1980). This classification is based on a model with two dimensions: Ego resiliency (the degree of an individual's flexibility and adaptation towards the demands of the environment) and Ego control (the intensity of expressed impulses and wishes, with self-discipline at one end and impulsivity / explosive behavior at the other). It describes three personality prototypes: *resilient* (characterized by a pattern of well-adapted behavior and social competence), *overcontrolled* (characterized by high emotional constraint) and *undercontrolled* (characterized by high impulsiveness and an inability to delay gratification). In the 90s, the three prototypes have also been extracted using the dimensions of the FFM (Robins, John, Caspi, Moffitt, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1996), thus starting the quest for finding the most appropriate number of personality types, based on the FFM.

Over the years, the three personality types were found to be the most replicable solution (e.g. Asendorpf & Van Aken, 1999; De Fruyt, Mervielde, & van Leeuwen, 2002; Klimstra, Luyckx, Teppers, Goossens,

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& De Fruyt, 2011; Robins, John, Caspi, Moffitt, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1996), but there were studies which identified five personality types (Herzberg & Roth, 2006) and even a solution with seven types (Pulkkinen, 1996). In the three prototypes solution, the *resilient* type presented above average scores for all the FFM dimensions and low for Neuroticism. The *overcontrolled* type involved below average scores for Extraversion, combined with above average ones for Neuroticism and Conscientiousness, the other two traits being less relevant for describing this type (Rammstedt, Riemann, Angleitner, & Borkenau, 2004). The third one, marked as the *undercontrolled* type, included people with low Conscientiousness and Agreeableness, and high levels of Extraversion and Neuroticism (De Fruyt, Mervielde, & van Leeuwen, 2002). Other prototypes have also emerged from different cluster research: for example, the *confident* type was marked by high Openness and Extraversion scores (Herzberg & Roth, 2006). Also, the *strain* type was characterized by below average scores for Agreeableness and above average for all other dimensions (Sava & Popa, 2011).

A vast majority of studies aiming at describing personality types have relied on the FFM, probably because of its popularity and its replication across cultures (McCrae, 2002). A rather less popular personality model (that has not been used so far to investigate personality types) is the Alternative Five-Factor Model (AFFM), developed and validated by Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Joireman, Teta, and Kraft (1993), after claiming that the FFM did not emphasize the biological bases of personality enough. The five factors of the AFFM (as defined by Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Joireman, Teta, & Kraft, 1993) are: Impulsive Sensation Seeking (which refers to the tendency of acting without thinking and planning, and the need for thrills, excitement and adventure), Neuroticism-Anxiety (which refers to negative emotions, fear and lack of self-confidence), Aggression-Hostility (which refers to the tendency to express verbal aggression, antisocial behavior and impatience towards others), Sociability (which refers to enjoying interacting with people, having lot of friends and being uncomfortable with social isolation) and Activity (which refers to the need for general activity, impatience and the preference for challenging and hard work).

One should note that the research conducted by Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Joireman, Teta, and Kraft (1993) is not the only one on the psychobiology of personality. More recent developments in personality theory (i.e. the Cybernetic Big Five Theory; DeYoung, 2015) also emphasized those aspects. DeYoung (2015) posited a plasticity factor as underlying covariation between Extraversion and Openness, which was linked to a neurological and biological basis.

At this point, one may have noticed that although the two personality models were constructed differently, some of their factors are quite similar. A clear statement has to be made before diving into the similarities and differences between the two models: they have much more in common than they have in opposition (Rossier et al., 2016). As several studies have shown (e.g. Angleitner, Riemann, & Spinath, 2004; Joireman & Kuhlman, 2004), both Sociability and Neuroticism-Anxiety showed strong positive relations with Extraversion and Neuroticism, respectively. Furthermore, Aggression-Hostility constantly presented a negative association with Agreeableness, but only of a moderate magnitude. Impulsive Sensation Seeking presented positive links with both Openness and Extraversion, and a negative one with Conscientiousness (e.g. Aluja, García, & García, 2002; Ostendorf & Angleitner, 1994), with mixed results concerning their intensities. Overall however, the association with Conscientiousness seems to be the strongest one, although it reached a moderate magnitude at best. Lastly, Activity presented several weak relations with Extraversion and Openness (e.g. Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Thornquist, & Kiers, 1991), the most consistent ones being with Extraversion. One could note that Extraversion has a facet called *activity*, but because the social component is not present in AFFM's Activity, they do not represent the same construct. It is also worth mentioning that because of Activity's presence, Openness has no counterpart in the AFFM (Joireman & Kuhlman, 2004).

The AFFM has been used in a large number of studies, with topics

varying from the biological correlates of personality traits (e.g. García, Aluja, Fibla, Cuevas, & García, 2010) to risk behavior (e.g. Ball, 1995; Nieva et al., 2011; Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000) and personality disorders (e.g. Aluja, García, Cuevas, & García, 2007; Gomà-i-Freixanet, Soler, Valero, Pascual, & Sola, 2008; Huang et al., 2011). Some authors (e.g. Sârbescu & Negut, 2012) noted that the AFFM factors showed good predictive validity in the study of risk behavior, often better than the FFM factors. Therefore, one might wonder why the AFFM has not been used so far for investigating personality types. We believe that part of the answer resides in the scarce evidence (at least until the last decade) for the model's cross-cultural generalizability. However, Rossier et al. (2007, 2016), using large sample data from 6 and 23 cultures respectively, provided evidence for the replication of the AFFM across cultures. Based on their findings, the authors suggested that the AFFM might be as universal as the FFM (Rossier et al., 2016).

As mentioned before, no studies up to date have tried to describe personality types based on the AFFM. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to investigate personality types based on the AFFM, while also verifying the internal and external validity of the most replicable solution.

2. Study 1

Firstly, we focused on identifying the most appropriate number of personality types based on the AFFM, as well as setting up a proper label for each one. In order to accomplish this objective, we used a cluster analysis approach identical to the one used in previous studies (e.g. Asendorpf, Borkenau, Ostendorf, & van Aken, 2001; Barbaranelli, 2002). Secondly, we verified the internal validity of the identified cluster solution, using a double-cross validation approach (Roth & Herzberg, 2007).

2.1. Methods

2.1.1. Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of 774 participants (56.3% male), aged between 19 and 63 years ($M = 28.19$, $SD = 10.47$). Regarding age distribution, 38.1% had between 19 and 21 years, 32.2% between 22 and 30, while 29.7% between 31 and 63. In terms of educational level, 1.81% graduated only middle school, 61.24% graduated high school and 36.95% graduated college. These participants were recruited by undergraduate psychology students (as bonus tasks in an introductory statistical course) and completed the Romanian version of the ZKPQ-50-CC in various test administrations. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality was assured and no incentives were given to the participants. The ZKPQ-50-CC was administered together with other questionnaires, in both paper and online form. Previous studies have provided support for the equivalence of the paper and online forms of the ZKPQ-50-CC (Aluja, Rossier, & Zuckerman, 2007), thus supporting this dual way of gathering data.

2.1.2. Instruments

The ZKPQ-50-CC is a shortened, cross-cultural version of the Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire (ZKPQ; Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Joireman, Teta, & Kraft, 1993), designed to measure the five personality factors of the AFFM: Impulsive Sensation Seeking (ImpSS), Neuroticism-Anxiety (N-Anx), Aggression-Hostility (Agg-Host), Activity (Act), and Sociability (Sy). Each subscale consists of 10 items with a true/false item format. The internal consistencies alphas (in this sample) were 0.68 for Agg-Host, 0.71 for Sy, 0.74 for ImpSS, 0.76 for Act and 0.78 for N-Anx. The ZKPQ has been previously translated and used for research purpose in Romania, proving itself as a valid instrument for assessing the AFFM factors (see Sârbescu & Negut, 2012 for psychometric properties; for more information concerning the cross-cultural equivalence of the ZKPQ-50-CC, please refer to Aluja et al., 2006).

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