



Short Communication

The link between neuroticism and perfectionistic concerns: The mediating effect of trait emotional intelligence



Martin M. Smith^{a,*}, Donald H. Saklofske^a, David W. Nordstokke^b

^a Department of Psychology, Western University, 1151 Richmond Street, London N6A3K7, Canada

^b Educational Studies in School Psychology, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive, Calgary T2N1N4, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 September 2013

Received in revised form 30 November 2013

Accepted 9 December 2013

Available online 28 December 2013

Keywords:

Perfectionism

Trait emotional intelligence

Neuroticism

ABSTRACT

Individuals with high perfectionistic concerns have overly negative reactions to perceived failures, nagging self-doubts, and excessive concerns over others' criticisms and expectations. While neuroticism is robustly associated with perfectionistic concerns, this study examined whether trait emotional intelligence (i.e., emotion related self-perceptions) mediates the relationship between neuroticism and perfectionistic concerns. A sample of 223 undergraduates completed measures of neuroticism, trait emotional intelligence, and perfectionistic concerns. As hypothesized, trait emotional intelligence partially mediated the neuroticism-perfectionistic concerns link. Individuals high on the neuroticism dimension but lower on trait emotional intelligence may be more prone to perfectionistic concerns.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Perfectionism refers to a propensity to strive for flawlessness, set excessively high standards, and experience disappointment or dissatisfaction with anything falling short of perfection (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). There is currently a broad consensus that perfectionism is comprised of two higher-order dimensions: perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns (Dunkley, Blankstein, & Berg, 2012; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Individuals with high perfectionistic strivings rigidly and ceaselessly demand perfection of the self and hold unrealistically high personal standards (Graham et al., 2010; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). In contrast individuals with high perfectionistic concerns have overly negative reactions to perceived failures, excessive concerns over others' expectations, and nagging self-doubts (Graham et al., 2010; Mackinnon & Sherry, 2012; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Moreover, individuals with high perfectionistic concerns describe themselves as easily discouraged, eager to quit, unprepared, inept, cynical, sad, hopeless, and prone to anger and frustration (Dunkley et al., 2012). A wealth of research indicates neuroticism is robustly associated with perfectionistic concerns (Dunkley et al., 2012). Despite this, major gaps still exist in our understanding of the neuroticism-perfectionistic concerns link.

1.1. Understanding the neuroticism-perfectionistic concerns link

Neuroticism is a higher-order domain of personality involving anxiety, sadness, and irritability (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Saucier, 1994). Individuals with high neuroticism tend to be more irascible, self-critical, sensitive to criticism, feel personally inadequate, and perceive a low level of available social support (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Lahey, 2009). Furthermore, individuals high in neuroticism tend to display maladaptive emotional responses to perceived loss, criticism, threats, and frustrations (Lahey, 2009). As a basic tendency, neuroticism is moderately stable from childhood to early adulthood (Caspi et al., 2003). Evidence also suggests neuroticism is substantially heritable (Lahey, 2009). For young men and women, 50–60% of the variance in neuroticism scores is attributable to genetic factors (Lake, Eaves, Maes, Heath, & Martin, 2000). Theory and evidence suggest neuroticism underlies and predisposes lower-order facets of personality (Lahey, 2009), including perfectionism (Sherry & Hall, 2009) and trait emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Finally, the importance of neuroticism as a core personality trait is underscored by its inclusion in the vast majority of personality models (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2003).

Numerous studies indicate neuroticism correlates moderately to strongly with perfectionistic concerns (e.g., Dunkley et al., 2012). However, it is important to note that while neuroticism and perfectionistic concerns overlap in content, research also indicates that perfectionistic concerns is a more differentiated construct that is also uniquely characterized by low agreeableness (Dunkley et al., 2012). Thus, research suggests perfectionistic

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 226 268 4156; fax: +1 519 661 3961.

E-mail address: msmit454@uwo.ca (M.M. Smith).

concerns are clearly distinguishable from neuroticism (Dunkley et al., 2012).

1.2. Emotional intelligence and the neuroticism-perfectionistic concerns link

Trait emotional intelligence (TEI) is a lower-order personality trait comprised of a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Specifically, trait EI offers a comprehensive operationalization of the affective aspects of personality and has been found to have incremental validity over the Big Five, the Giant Three, and other personality variables (Andrei & Petrides, 2013). In addition, TEI is central to the development and implementation of successful coping strategies (Petrides, Pérez-González, & Furnham, 2007). Research suggests that individuals with low TEI, compared to individuals with high TEI, more readily engage in maladaptive coping when confronted with perceived stressors (Petrides et al., 2007). Furthermore, TEI is related to perceived social support (Austin, Saklofske, & Egan, 2005). Individuals with low TEI tend to feel excluded and unwanted (Austin et al., 2005). In addition, TEI measures self-perceived ability to establish satisfying relationships characterized by intimacy, as well as self-perceived ability to control emotions and impulses (Petrides & Furnham, 2001).

Based on past research it seems likely that individuals with high perfectionistic concerns would have low TEI. More specifically, individuals with high perfectionistic concerns tend to engage in maladaptive coping (e.g., denial) when confronted with perceived stressors (Dunkley, Blankstein, Halsall, Williams, & Winkworth, 2000). Moreover, perfectionistic concerns are associated with a lack of perceived social support (Sherry et al., 2013). Research also suggests that perfectionistic concerns are maintained and manifested via various insecure expressions such as intimacy avoidance, disengagement from decisions and actions, and suspiciousness (Dunkley et al., 2000; Dunkley et al., 2012). As well, individuals with high perfectionistic concerns tend to experience excessive emotional dysregulation (Aldea & Rice, 2006). Thus TEI is expected to have a negative relationship with perfectionistic concerns.

Both TEI and perfectionistic concerns have a moderate to strong association with neuroticism (Dunkley et al., 2012; Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Given that neuroticism is a higher-order personality trait thought to underlie TEI and perfectionistic concerns, and further that TEI is expected to be negatively related to perfectionistic concerns it is reasonable to suggest that TEI mediates the neuroticism-perfectionistic concerns link. The current study addresses this gap in knowledge.

1.3. Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that trait emotional intelligence would be related to perfectionistic concerns after controlling for neuroticism. Based on past research, we further hypothesize that trait emotional intelligence would mediate the neuroticism-perfectionistic concerns link.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 223 undergraduate students (113 men; 110 female); the majority (84.3%) were in the first year of study. Average age was 19.06 ($SD = 2.20$) years.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Neuroticism

Neuroticism was measured using the 8-item *Big-Five Mini-Markers Neuroticism Scale* (Big 5-N; Saucier, 1994). Participants responded on a 9-point scale from 1 (*extremely inaccurate*) to 9 (*extremely accurate*). Research supports the reliability and validity of this measure (Saucier, 1994).

2.2.2. Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence was measured using the 30-item *Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form* (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). Participants responded on a 7-point scale from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). Studies support the reliability and validity of this measure (Cooper & Petrides, 2010).

2.2.3. Perfectionistic concerns

Perfectionistic concerns were measured by standardizing and summing items from the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale Socially Prescribed Perfectionism subscale (HFMPs-SPP; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale Concern Over Mistakes subscale (FMPS-COM; Frost et al., 1990); and the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale Doubts About Actions subscale (FMPS-DAA; Frost et al., 1990). Participants responded to the 5-item HFMPs-SPP using a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Participants responded to the 9-item FMPS-COM and the 4-item FMPS-DAA using a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The HFMPs-SPP, the FMPS-COM, and the FMPS-DAA were selected based on past research indicating that they measure core cognitive, interpersonal, and behavioral features of perfectionistic concerns (Graham et al., 2010; Mackinnon & Sherry, 2012). Research supports the reliability and validity of this measure (Mackinnon & Sherry, 2012). The alpha reliability for perfectionistic concerns was .89 in Mackinnon and Sherry (2012).

2.3. Procedure

The author's Research Ethic's Board approved the present study. Participants were recruited from the Department of Psychology's subject pool and directed to the online study. Following the completion of the online study participants were debriefed. As compensation, participants were awarded 1 credit to use toward an introductory psychology course.

2.4. Data analysis

Less than 5% of data points were missing (2.7–4.9%). For path analysis full information maximum likelihood estimation was used. Research suggests full information maximum likelihood estimation outperforms traditional missing data techniques (e.g., model-based imputation; Enders, 2010).

A path analysis was conducted using Mplus 6.0 to test the hypothesis that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between neuroticism and perfectionistic concerns. The indirect effect was calculated as the product of the direct effect of neuroticism on TEI by the direct effect of TEI on perfectionistic concerns. The significance of the indirect effect was computed via bias-corrected bootstrapping with 20,000 resamples (Mackinnon & Sherry, 2012). Bias-corrected bootstrapping was used as a nonparametric alternative as a consequence of indirect effects tending to have distributions that are skewed away from 0 (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). If the 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect does not contain 0 it suggests the presence of mediation. In addition, the comparative fit index difference test (ΔCFI)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/890542>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/890542>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)