



Brief Report

Personality and the four faces of positive affect: A multitrait-multimethod analysis using self- and peer-report

Kristin Mitte*, Nicole Kämpfe

Department of Psychology, University of Jena, Humboldstr. 11, 07743 Jena, Germany

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the relationship between personality and positive affects (contentment, love, interest, and joy). Using multitrait-multimethod analysis and structural equation modeling procedures with self- and peer-report, the authors demonstrated the importance of differentiating between the positive affects. A multidimensional model fitted better than a general-factor model. Concerning the personality–affect relationship, the strongest relations were found between extraversion and both joy and love, agreeableness and love, openness to experiences and interest, and neuroticism and contentment. Thus, results suggest that it is insufficient to concentrate solely on extraversion when investigating the personality–positive affect relationship.

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1. Introduction

One of the most cited and replicated result in the research of personality and affect¹ is that interindividual differences in extraversion predict levels of positive affect (for reviews, see DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Lucas and Fujita, 2000). Commonly, researchers measure general positive affect because it is assumed that general positive affect is a second-order factor of the various positive first-order affects (e.g., Watson & Clark, 1997). Alternatively, positive affect is separated into positive-active affect (e.g., excited) and positive-inactive affect (e.g., relaxed) basing on the affective circumplex model of Russell (1980). However, one major problem of such models is that quite distinct affects are located close to each other so that differences between affects are neglected (see Larsen & Diener, 1992).

When investigating positive affects, the first problem arising is the only little agreement about how many and which positive emotional experiences exist (Ortony & Turner, 1990). Whereas some researchers suggest that positive affect can be broken down into only a few broad dimensions (e.g., Izard, 1977: interest and joy²; Diener, Smith, & Fujita, 1995: joy and love), other identified several classes (e.g., Ellsworth & Smith, 1988: interest, hope/confidence, challenge, tranquility, playfulness, and love). One alternative approach was currently suggested by Fredrickson (1998), who integrated typical emotions from other conceptions. She distinguished between contentment, love, interest, and joy and described these emotions as follows: contentment “prompts individuals to savor their current life circumstances and recent successes, experience “oneness” with the world around them, and integrate recent events and achievements into their overall self-concept and world view” (p. 306), love was described as a blend of positive emotions related to other persons, interest was described according to Izard (1977) as “a feeling of wanting to investigate, become involved, or extend or expand the self by incorporating new information

* Corresponding author. Fax: +49 (0)3641 945162.

E-mail address: mail@kristin-mitte.de (K. Mitte).

¹ Affect can be considered as the main category of emotions and mood but is in the present article interchangeably used with the term emotions.

² It should be noted that Izard also suggested that surprise is a basic positive emotion but this is problematic because the valence of surprise depends on the situation and the context (Ortony & Turner, 1990).

and having new experiences with the person or object that has stimulated the interest” (p. 305), and “joy creates the urge to play and be playful in the broadest sense of the word” (p. 304f) and is described as “aimless activation” (according to Frijda, 1986). Obviously, the Russell’s circumplex cannot distinguish between these four affects (contentment: positive-inactive; joy, love, and interest: positive-active).

So far, there is no study available that investigates the relationship between personality and the four positive affects posulated by Fredrickson and only few studies used other distinct positive affects. For example, Watson and Clark (1992) distinguished between joviality, self-assurance, and attentiveness and found that each of these affects was differently predicted by personality (joviality: extraversion and agreeableness; self-assurance: extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness; attentiveness: conscientiousness and extraversion). Comparable results were found by Shiota, Keltner, and John (2006), who distinguished between joy, contentment, pride, love, compassion, amusement, and awe. Even though extraversion was correlated with each of the positive affects, also the other personality traits were significantly related to positive affects. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of method effects. Correlations between personality and emotions assessed with self-report were inflated through common method variance. When peer-ratings of personality were used the relationships between personality and positive affects were considerably weaker: extraversion was significantly correlated only with contentment and pride, agreeableness with love, and neuroticism with love (negatively). Unfortunately, only product-moment correlations between emotion and personality were reported leaving the complex relationships between the variables unconsidered.

The aim of the present study was twofold. First, we will investigate whether the four dimensions of Fredrickson (1998) are distinct or are better subsumed under higher order factors ((a) common positive factor model; (b) two-factors model: positive-active, positive-inactive). Second, we will examine the relationship between the four dimensions of positive affect and the five-factor model of personality. Given previous findings, extraverts were assumed to show higher scores on all four positive dimensions. A particularly strong relationship should be found for joy; Tellegen (1985), for example, posited that extraversion might be more related to positive-active affect than to positive-nonactive affect. According to the meaning of the traits, we additionally hypothesized a positive relationship between openness for experience and interest and between agreeableness and love. In contrast to previous studies, we used structural equation modeling and multiple method measurement for measuring positive affects by collecting both self-ratings and peer-ratings and thereby extending previous research by separating positive emotion variance from method variance, by investigating the complex relationships between positive emotions and personality, and by testing the generalizability of findings across methods.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 214 individuals (mostly students). For 212 of these, peer reports were provided. The targets were composed of 159 females (74%) with a mean age of 22.4 years ($SD = 3.1$). Fifty-nine percent of the peers were female (three peers did not report their sex) and their mean age was 25.7 ($SD = 8.4$). Participants and peers completed the questionnaires at home as a part of a larger study.

2.2. Measures

The German version of the NEO-FFI (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1993) was used to obtain a measure of personality; the five factors are measured with 12 items each anchored by 1 (certainly disagree) and 5 (certainly agree).

The positive affects were assessed with the CLIJ-Questionnaire, which was developed by the authors and measures both the intensity and the frequency of the four affects on a dispositional level. The 22 items of the CLIJ based directly on the description of the positive affects contentment (C), love (L), interest (I), and joy (J) by Fredrickson (1998). The contentment-scale consists of five items (e.g., “I often feel a state of inner tranquillity and contentment”), the love-scale consists of six items (e.g., “There are people in my life, I’m closely connected with”), the interest-scale consists of five items (e.g., “Mostly, I seek understanding of how things work”), and the joy-scale consists of six items (e.g., “Sometimes I kid around”). Participants rated each item on a 7-point scale (1 = certainly disagree to 7 = certainly agree).

2.3. Structural equation modeling of MTMM data

We utilized the correlated trait-correlated method minus one [CTC($M-1$)] approach (Eid, 2000; Eid, Lischetzke, Nussbeck, & Trierweiler, 2003) with self-report as reference method. Accordingly, the four latent emotion factors represent the true scores of self-reported emotions while the method factor for peer-report reflects unique method variance over and above the self-report. Information regarding convergent validity is obtainable from a comparison of the path loadings. In the present case, convergent validity is indicated by large path loadings of peer-reported emotions onto their respective latent emotion factors (consistency coefficients) relative to path loading onto the method factor (method specificity). Discriminant validity is indicated by non-perfect correlations between the latent emotion factors. However, these correlations still reflect shared method variance of self-report. Thus, we will also calculate the CTC($M-1$) model using peer-report as reference meth-

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