# The Relationship between Resilience and Personality Traits in Women

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**ABSTRACT:** Recent investigations have supported the hypothesis on relationship between different personality traits and both happiness and resilience. This relationship can be more critical in women due to their important role in economic and social development programs. Hence, the present study attempted to assess relationship of personality traits with resilience and happiness in women. In this prospective correlational study conducted during the two months from April to May 2013, 388 women were randomly selected from all housewives and working women who were resident in Tehran. Three psychological questionnaires of the Revised NEO Personality Inventory, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale were used to assess study endpoints of personality traits, happiness, and resilience, respectively. Regarding the relation between personality traits and happiness (assessed by the Pearson's correlation coefficient test), happiness was related to all five components of personality traits including Neuroticism, Extraversion, Flexibility, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. Extraversion being an exception, other domains of personality traits was correlated with self-concept. In addition, except for Agreeableness, other personality traits were related with psychological alertness. Self-efficacy was also associated with the personality traits of Extraversion, Flexibility, and Conscientiousness. Life satisfaction and Hopefulness were only associated with Neuroticism component of personality. With respect to association between personality traits and resilience, Neuroticism was negatively and Extraversion, Flexibility, and Conscientiousness were positively associated with the level of resilience. Multivariable linear regression analysis showed significant effects of the components of Extraversion and Flexibility on total score of happiness. Additionally, in another regression analysis, significant influence of some personality traits including Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Flexibility on total score of resilience was confirmed. Personality traits can potentially affect different aspects of happiness and resilience in women. Hence, women with stabilized personality are accordingly happy and resilient.
**Key words:** Personality Traits, Happiness, Resilience, Women

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues that have been recently noticed is the effect of personality traits on happiness (Argyle, 2001). Happy people have better condition in marriage, friendships, income and job performance as well as have fewer health problems than those who are unhappy (Diener et al., 2008, Diener et al., 2005) and also better decide for their living programs (Argyle, 1995). Social relationships, social support, emotional intelligence and their interactive effects are significantly predictive of happiness. Argil and colleagues defined the happiness as consists of three basic components including "positive emotion", "life satisfaction" and "lack of negative emotions" (Seligman, 2002). It has been also believed that happiness is one of the fundamental specific behaviors in the life that plays an important role in the social and psychological life (Conner et al., 2003). Happiness is how to judge a person about his or her living. This judgment influenced by personal perceptions and experiences of positive emotions that can affect the individuals' style of explanation, judgment, and decision. In this regard, happiness is usually considered as the feelings of life satisfaction and the lack of negative emotions such as depression.

One of the other factors that influence personality characteristics is resilience that defined as the person's ability to adapt to adverse conditions. Resilience includes individual competence, trust internal dynamics, and accepting the change as a positive or negative impact (Bitsika, et al., 2010; Korhonen, 2007). Based on the recent opinions, although resilience is somewhat considered as a personality trait and or environmental experiences, but people are not the victims of their environment or heredity, and thus people can be trained to increase their resilience capacity by learning some certain skills. It is now believed that resilience is not a trait that a young is born with it or automatically ends with his or her death (Waller, 2001). In fact, resilience is a positive adaptation in response to adverse conditions (Meichenbaum, 2013). Resilience is the ability of an individual to create a biological and psychological balance in hazardous conditions (Kenneth et al., 2007).

Personality is a determinant factor affecting all human behavioral aspects in personal and social life. The personality can be defined as specific evident of the profile of behavioral response patterns in ordinary life that is frequently stable and predictable (Kenneth, et al., 2007). On the other hand, personality is a dynamic organization of mental and physiological system that structures individual's thoughts and

behaviors (Bouchard et al., 1999). Therefore, personality can be considered as the factor that distinct person from others and provide the ability to predict the relative behavior in certain situations.

Recent investigations have supported the hypothesis on relationship of different personality aspects with both happiness and resilience. For instance, the relationship of happiness with some personality traits including self-efficacy, extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness has been shown in working women (Becker et al., 1997). Also, negative relationship was shown between happiness and neuroticism (Watson et al., 2002). Besides, neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness have be shown to have a significant relationship with resilience, however there was no significant correlation between the resilience and openness and consensus (Cheng et al., 2002). These findings can be more critical in women due to their important role in economic and social development programs. Hence, the present study attempted to assess relationship of personality traits with resilience and happiness in women.

## METHODS

### Study samples

In this prospective correlational study, conducted during the two months from April to May 2013, 388 women were randomly selected from all housewives and working women who were resident in Tehran in the pointed time period. According to the latest reports from the Iran Census Bureau in 2006, the distribution of housewives and working women in Tehran was reported 1,300,000 and 494313 of total population, respectively. The samples were randomly collected from public places, parks, general clinics who were willing to cooperate. The sampling was based on the Morgan sampling table.

Study measurements: Three psychological questionnaires were used to assess personality traits, happiness, and resilience. These questionnaires included:

1) The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) that was primarily developed by Costa Jr. and McCrae (Costa, 1995). For use with adult men and women without overt psychopathology. This tool is consists a 240-item measure of the Big Five personality traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. The short version of this questionnaire, the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), has 60 items (12 items per domain) that was used in the present survey. The internal consistency of the questionnaire among Iranian population was high at five domains of the questionnaire, at: N = 0.84, E = 0.82, O = 0.77, A = 0.65, C = 0.86 examined by the test-retest analysis and

also at N = 0.79, E = 0.73, O = 0.42, A = 0.58, and C = 0.77 based on the based on the Cronbach's alpha calculation (BagherianSararoudi et al., 2011).

2) The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) that was developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University in 1989 for assessment of happiness status. The OHQ comprises 29 items (Hills and Argyle, 2002). The OHQ demonstrated high scale reliability in our population with value Cronbach's alpha 0.93.

3) The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale or CD-RISC developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) is a 25-item scale that measures the ability to cope with stress and adversity and including five components of personal competence, trust/tolerance/strengthening effects of stress, and acceptance of change and secure relationships, control, and spiritual influences (Connor et al., 2003). Alpha reliability was observed as 0.89.

### Statistical analysis

The Pearson's correlation test was applied to correlate between the study measures. For the statistical analysis, the statistical software SPSS version 20.0 for windows (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL) was used. P values of 0.05 or less were considered statistically significant.

## RESULTS

Among 388 recruited women, 1.5% of them were illiterate, while 5.9% had a diploma, 9.3% had a bachelor degree, 33.2% had a master degree, and 8.8% had doctoral degree. Regarding distribution, only 1.0% of participants were younger than 20 years; whereas 32.5% were aged 21 to 30 years, 40.2% were aged 31 to 40 years, 14.4% were aged 41 to 50 years, and others were older than 50 years. Regarding Relationship between personality traits and happiness domains (Relationship by the Pearson's correlation coefficient test, the Happiness domain was associated with all five components of personality traits including Neuroticism, Extraversion, Flexibility, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Table 1). Except for Extraversion, other domains of personality traits were correlated with Self-concept. Also, except for Agreeableness domain, other personality traits domains were correlated with psychologically alerting. Self-efficacy was also correlated with the personality traits of Extraversion, Flexibility, and Conscientiousness. The domains of Life satisfaction and Hopefulness of happiness were only correlated with Neuroticism component of personality (Table 1). With respect to correlate between personality traits and resilience, Neuroticism (r = -0.243, p < 0.001) were negative and Extraversion (r = 0.195, p < 0.001), Flexibility (0.179, p < 0.001), and Conscientiousness (r = 0.109, p = 0.032) were positively correlated with the

level of resilience. Multivariable linear regression model (Table 2) showed significant effects of the components of Extraversion (Beta = -0.628, p < 0.001) and Flexibility (Beta = -0.486, p = 0.002) on total score of happiness. Also, in another linear regression model (Table 3), meaningful influence of some personality domains including Neuroticism (Beta = -0.855, p < 0.001), Extraversion (Beta = 0.803, p < 0.001), and Flexibility (Beta = 0.589, p < 0.001) on total score of resilience was confirmed.

**Table 1.** Relationship between personality traits and happiness domains (Assessed by the Pearson's correlation coefficient test)

|  | Neuroticism | Extraversion | Flexibility | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Happiness** | -0.132 (0.004) | -0.311 (0.001) | -0.246 (0.001) | -0.131 (0.005) | -0.202 (0.001) |
| **Self-Concept** | -0.400 (0.001) | -0.094 (0.064) | -0.110 (0.031) | -0.159 (0.002) | -0.109 (0.033) |
| **Life Satisfaction** | 0.228 (0.001) | -0.094 (0.063) | -0.096 (0.059) | 0.021 (0.675) | -0.030 (0.559) |
| **Psychologically Alert** | 0.138 (0.007) | -0.238 (0.001) | -0.200 (0.001) | -0.068 (0.180) | -0.123 (0.016) |
| **Tastefulness** | 0.173 (0.001) | -0.128 (0.011) | -0.097 (0.056) | 0.017 (0.737) | -0.017 (0.741) |
| **Aesthetic Sense** | 0.113 (0.026) | -0.214 (0.001) | -0.054 (0.291) | 0.073 (0.152) | -0.047 (0.355) |
| **Self-Efficacy** | 0.590 (0.244) | -0.168 (0.001) | -0.111 (0.028) | -0.450 (0.380) | -0.132 (0.010) |
| **Hopefulness** | -0.266 (0.001) | -0.073 (0.152) | -0.079 (0.120) | -0.097 (0.057) | -0.096 (0.059) |

**Table 2.** The effects of personality traits on happiness

|  | Beta | Standard Error | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| **First Model** |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** | -0.758 | 0.118 | 0.001 |
| **Second Model** |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** | -0.628 | 0.123 | 0.001 |
| **Flexibility** | -0.486 | 0.155 | 0.002 |

**Table 3.** The effects of personality traits on resilience

|  | Beta | Standard Error | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| **First Model** |  |  |  |
| **Neuroticism** | -0.581 | 0.118 | 0.001 |
| **Second Model** |  |  |  |
| **Neuroticism** | -0.823 | 0.119 | 0.001 |
| **Extraversion** | 0.946 | 0.150 | 0.001 |
| **Third Model** |  |  |  |
| **Neuroticism** | -0.855 | 0.118 | 0.001 |
| **Extraversion** | 0.803 | 0.155 | 0.001 |
| **Flexibility** | 0.589 | 0.187 | 0.001 |

## DISCUSSION

Our study could demonstrate multiple correlations between the different components of personality traits and various domains of happiness. In this regard, the correlation of Happiness, Self-concept, Psychologically alerting, and Self-efficacy with personality traits was more highlighted. The results of some previous studies were also along with our observation (Zelenski et al., 2013, Wilt et al., 2012; Cloninger et al., 2012). It can be inferred from the results that neurotic individuals experience different emotional turmoil such as frustration, fear, and guilt as a default. These negative features lead to making irrational beliefs .less ability to control psychological impulses, and poorer adaptation to stress conditions (Tamir, 2009). On the other hand, conscientious people seems to be more targeted, with a sense of duty, accountable, self-restrained, tends to progress and discipline, loyal to the word, hard-working, and steadfast (Cammock et al., 1994). Happy people avoid negative emotions such as anxiety and depression and

seek positive and cordially relations with others, with considering this fact that anxiety and depression are the traits of neuroticism determinants (Weiss et al., 2008). Neurotic individuals are less relaxed in an unsuitable environment with a lack of proper planning for leisure time and also with an appropriate physical status. These people are generally more prone to anxiety, sadness, fear, and aggregation as well as used emotional copying styles such as feelings of anxiety, self-blame, uncertainty and anger in dealing with stress, and thus less used problem-oriented styles in these situations (DeNeve et al., 1998). Being in more stressful and insecure environments requires nervousness, neurosis, bad temperamental state and moodiness, conflict, insecurity and a lack of relaxation and mental and physical health (Srivastava et al., 2008 ). In contrast, happy individuals have positive especial characteristics and also have a strong network with others. The characteristic of fear, hostility, and impulsive feelings are especially correlated with negative emotions and less happiness, while some features such as being social and active is correlated with more happiness and positive emotions (Srivastava et al., 2008). It can be hoped to obtain higher level of happiness by changing attitudes, making targeted activities, and achieving meaningful personal lives.

Regarding correlation between resilience and personality traits, we showed correlations of resilience with Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Flexibility but not with Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. People with negative affect are less likely to face with more difficult situations disasters and show more conflict with these conditions (Diehl et al., 2012). Extroverted person have more positive emotional style and excitement, have sincere interpersonal interaction and social activities and also seek supports of other people (Tugade et al., 2004). People with high self-efficacy are high conscientiousness; actively participate in planning and problem solving; and avoid passive and inappropriate coping styles (Diehl Hay, 2010). Thus, the people who have high resilience are more flexible, can adapt themselves to improper conditions, struggle with the difficulties and dangers, and keeping them safe against mental and physical impairments.

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