Title of paper: Children’s Subjective Well-being: Personality and Demographic Correlates

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Abstract:
Over the past few decades, a large number of studies have been conducted to explain variations in subjective well-being. Most of these studies emphasised demographic factors, which were consistently found to be able to explicate only a small amount of variation in well-being. To find a better explanation, researchers are recently focusing on personality of individuals. However, these studies are mainly based on adults. There is little evidence on how personality characteristics are related to children’s subjective well-being. The present study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relative strength of both personality and demographic factors in explaining variation in children’s subjective well-being.

Data for this article were from a pilot study conducted over 400 young people aged 11 to 15 from mainstream secondary schools in England in September 2010. Participants filled the questionnaire online and were asked about their age, gender. The International Personality Item Pool’s Big-Five Factor Markers (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional stability and Imagination) containing 35 items were used to measure personality. A five-item five-point scale on life satisfaction was developed to measure subjective well-being.

Bivariate correlations revealed that each Big Five personality sub-scale as well as age and gender were statistically significantly associated with well-being. A two-stage multiple regression analysis indicated that the demographic factors in stage 1 accounted for 3.4 percent of the variation in well-being. In stage 2, personality sub-scales were added into the analysis. The model explained 43.1 percent of variation of which personality alone accounted for about 40 percent variation. The effect of age and gender were not statistically significant when personality sub-scales were controlled. All but the imagination sub-scale were statistically significant. Emotional stability and extraversion had respectively the first and second highest effect on children’s subjective well-being. These findings are discussed in the context of previous empirical studies and theories on personality and well-being. Suggestions for future research are also put forward.