

Extraversion and Psychological Wellbeing amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: the Moderating Role of Social Interactions among Younger and Older Adults

ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Social interaction during COVID-10 pandemic might be a moderator to explain the contradictory findings on the relationship between extraversion and psychological wellbeing. Yet, the social interaction in terms of duration and level of satisfaction might pose different impacts on different age groups. This study examined the association between extraversion and psychological wellbeing, in terms of affective balance, life satisfaction, meaning in life and flourishing, and how the relationship would be influenced by the moderators of social interaction and age during the pandemic.

Research Design and Methods: Data were collected from March to May 2020 from 91 younger adults and 107 older adults through a 21-day self-reported daily diary. Participants reported the positive and negative emotions, social interaction duration and level of satisfaction with family on a daily basis. The scores on personality, perceived life satisfaction, meaning in life and flourishing were collected. A three-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed.

Results: Extraversion continued to provide positive influence during the pandemic and enhanced psychological wellbeing. Results from the three-way interaction revealed that both social interaction time and level of social interaction satisfaction with family moderated the relationship between extraversion and psychological wellbeing, and this impact occurred to a greater extent in Younger Adults (YA) than Older Adults (OA).

More social interaction time enhanced the extraversion effect on affective balance and flourishing (both YA and OA), life satisfaction (YA only) and meaning in life (OA only). Higher level of social interaction satisfaction positively supported the extraversion effect on flourishing (both YA and OA), affective balance and life satisfaction (YA only) and meaning in life (OA only).

Discussion and Implications: Findings of this study provide insights on how social interaction moderated the relationship between extraversion and psychological wellbeing during the pandemic. Recommendations on social interaction strategy should be provided to family members and community services in order to empower older adults to cultivate a sense of meaning in life and flourishing, so as to enhance their psychological wellbeing.