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Extraversion As a Correlate of Psychologically Rich Life: A Cross-Cultural Study

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Abstract

A psychologically rich life (PRL) is distinct from happiness or meaning, emphasising variety, interest, and perspective-changing experiences. Extraversion, one of the Big Five personality traits, is characterized by sociability, enthusiasm, and positive emotionality, and is a potential predictor of PRL. This cross-cultural study examined the relationship between PRL and facets of extraversion among 300 participants (150 Kenyans and 150 Indians) aged 20–40 years. Participants were assessed on psychological richness and extraversion. Results revealed significant cultural differences in psychologically rich life and facets of extraversion. The Kenyans scored significantly higher on psychological richness in life compared to Indians. The Indians scored higher on warmth, assertiveness, activity, and excitement-seeking, while both groups displayed similar levels of gregariousness and positive emotions. Correlational analysis indicated that PRL was positively associated with gregariousness, assertiveness, and positive emotions for the Kenyans, while warmth was significantly associated with PRL in Indians. These findings suggest that the role of extraversion facets in psychologically rich life among Indians and Kenyans reflects the interplay of cultural norms, societal values, and individual personality traits. While both countries are collectivist to varying degrees, their unique cultural contexts shape how extraversion is expressed and experienced, thereby influencing psychologically rich life differently.

Keywords: extraversion, psychologically rich life, cultural difference

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Introduction

A psychologically rich life (PRL) is a life characterized by variety, interest, and transformative shifts in perspective. Psychologically rich life has been proposed as another aspect of the good life that has remained neglected for long. In contrast, a happy life is defined by joy, comfort, and stability, while a meaningful life embodies significance, purpose, and coherence. Some individuals neither pursue happiness nor seek meaning exclusively. Research by Oishi highlights that PRL is related to, but distinct from, both a happy and meaningful life, with its unique causes and consequences (Besser & Oishi, 2020). PRL is described as encompassing “diverse, interesting, and perspective-changing experiences” (Oishi and Westgate, 2021). Certain personal attributes and situational elements are more likely to foster psychologically enriching experiences, contributing to a PRL. Experiences that are novel, complex, surprising, and perspective-altering, often involving uncertainty, are key factors in generating interest (Berlyne, 1960).

Such experiences are central to a psychologically rich life. While enjoyment and pleasure often increase with complexity, they peak at a certain threshold. Unlike pleasure, interest remains robust even in highly complex scenarios (Berlyne, 1974). Tomkins (1962) suggested that ‘interest-excitement’ is a core aspect of human motivation, crucial for sustained attention. He argued that sustained interest underpins perception, cognition, and action, emphasizing its importance for thriving. Interest arises when individuals engage with novel and complex stimuli or situations, highlighting that enjoyable experiences are not always psychologically rich, and psychologically rich experiences may lack immediate pleasure or comfort. A psychologically rich life is not merely a series of fleeting moments of interest; it emerges from an accumulation of meaningful, perspective-shifting encounters over time. Oishi and Westgate (2021) propose that a life imbued with psychological richness involves experiences of

novelty and complexity that lead to significant perspective changes.

Personality traits play a significant role in shaping an individual's pursuit of a psychologically rich life (PRL). Oishi and Westgate (2021) argue that individuals with a strong sense of curiosity and openness to new experiences are more likely to engage with complex and enriching life paths. Characteristics like a vivid imagination, artistic sensitivity, emotional depth, adaptability, intellectual curiosity, and a penchant for unconventional thinking play a vital role in fostering psychological richness. People with deep emotional experiences often lead more intricate lives (Larsen & Diener, 1987). Merely undergoing intense emotions or facing challenging circumstances does not ensure a psychologically rich life; what truly matters is how individuals perceive and respond to these experiences. A mindset characterized by curiosity, openness, and emotional depth fuels the quest for such a fulfilling life. The unique ways individuals respond to life events are critical in shaping their ability to lead a mentally fulfilling existence. Thus, novelty, curiosity, openness to experience, and emotional depth are proposed as catalysts for psychological richness. Those who are curious and open actively seek and value novel, complex experiences, often encountering perspective-altering situations. These qualities are linked to enhanced creativity, personal growth, and self-actualization. According to Kashdan et al. (2018), inquisitiveness motivates individuals to explore a wide range of interests, which can facilitate the perspective shifts integral to psychological richness.

The outcomes of a psychologically rich life are as diverse as the factors contributing to it. A life abundant in psychologically enriching experiences is likely to cultivate wisdom (Oishi and Westgate, 2021), much as happiness fosters personal satisfaction and meaningful experiences drive societal progress. Sternberg (2000) describes wisdom as the ability to recognize life's uncertainties and limitations while effectively navigating novel and complex social contexts. Wisdom involves synthesizing diverse viewpoints, considering long-term consequences, and committing to personal

growth and societal well-being. Holistic thinking styles (Choi et al., 2007) and attributional complexity (Fletcher et al., 1986) are linked to good social judgment (Fast, Reimer, & Funder, 2008) and are associated with the qualities of a psychologically rich life. Extraversion is one of the five major dimensions in the Big Five personality traits model (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and it is typically characterized by traits such as sociability, enthusiasm, assertiveness, activity, and positive emotionality. It has long been of interest in the field of psychology, especially in relation to well-being and life satisfaction. When examining the role of extraversion in defining a psychologically rich life (PRL), it is essential to understand its impact both from an individual perspective and within different cultural contexts. A study by Heine et al. (1999) suggests that the way people experience positive emotions and social interactions is influenced by cultural context. The present study aims to explore the role of extraversion in predicting a psychologically rich life among Indians and Kenyans.

Objectives

1. To compare Indians and Kenyans on psychologically rich life and extraversion facets.
2. To assess the relationship between the psychologically rich life and facets of extraversion among Indians and Kenyans.

Hypotheses

1. There would be significant differences in psychologically rich life and extraversion facets among Indians and Kenyans.
2. There would be significant differences in the relationship between psychologically rich life and extraversion facets among Indians and Kenyans

Method

Design and Sample

A two-group design was used to fulfil the objectives of the study. The sample consisted of 300 respondents aged between 20 to 40 years, of which 150 were Kenyans either practising Christianity or Islam (Mean age= 27.17, SD =

5.806) and 150 were Indians practising Hinduism (Mean age= 26.84, SD = 4.593).

Measure Used

Measure of Psychologically Rich Questionnaire: *Psychologically Rich Life Questionnaire:* The Psychologically Rich Life questionnaire by Oishi et al. (2019) was used to assess psychological richness. The questionnaire has 17 questions, which requires respondents to rate their responses on a scale of seven (seven = strongly agree and one = strongly disagree). The scale has sound psychometric properties.

Measure of Extraversion:

Neo-Personality Inventory (Neo-Pi-R): The facets of extraversion were assessed using Neo-Personality Inventory by Costa & McCrae (1992). The NEO PI-R serves as a tool to evaluate the five major personality domains and the six facets delineating each domain. Additionally, the test assesses six subordinate dimensions, referred to as 'facets,' for each of the five personality factors. The NEO-PI-R consists of 240 - items measuring the following 5 dimensions of personality: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, & Conscientiousness. The extraversion dimension has six facets which are Warmth, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Activity, Excitement Seeking and Positive Emotion. Respondents utilise a 5-point rating

scale to indicate the extent of their agreement with each item, ranging from Strongly Agree to Disagree Strongly.

Procedure

To achieve the current research's objective, respondents were approached personally. Every participant in the study received details about the purpose and aim of the research, and they received assurances that their responses would be kept very private and personal. After establishing rapport with the partaker, the scales were administered, starting with questions regarding demographic information. Instructions regarding each questionnaire were provided to the respondents. It was assured that the participants had responded to each item, and no question was left unanswered. The results were scored according to the manual, and data was analysed using SPSS software.

RESULTS

In order to assess cultural differences in PRL and the facets of extraversion, the mean scores of the two groups were analysed by applying t-test. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the variables under study; the table also shows the results of mean comparisons of the Kenyans and Indians on measures of PRL and the facets of extraversion.

Table 1

Mean comparisons on PRL and Extraversion facets

Variable	Kenyans (150)		Indians (150)		Mean Difference	t-value
	Mean	SD values	Mean	SD values	MD	
PRL	87.987	10.419	83.020	14.171	4.967	3.458**
Extraversion Facets						
Warmth (E1)	14.393	3.991	19.240	4.133	-4.847	10.331**
Gregariousness (E2)	15.887	4.228	15.913	3.802	-.027	.057
Assertiveness (E3)	15.147	4.507	16.040	3.080	-.893	2.004*
Activity (E4)	15.340	3.569	17.167	2.767	-1.827	4.954**
Excitement Seeking (E5)	15.787	2.919	18.880	3.456	-3.093	8.375**
Positive Emotions (E6)	19.020	3.923	18.213	3.660	.807	1.841

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

The results in Table 1 point to significant cultural differences ($t=3.458$, $p<0.01$) in psychological richness. Kenyans (Mean score= 87.987) scored significantly higher on PRL compared to Indians (Mean score= 83.020). The differences observed between the Kenyan sample and the Indian sample on each facet of extraversion provide a broad understanding of how individuals differ in their social behaviour, emotional expression and their approach to interpersonal interactions. The differences observed between the Kenyan sample and the Indian sample in table 1 highlight varying cultural norms and personal dispositions that contribute to these personality traits. In the case of Warmth (E1), the Indian sample displayed significantly more warmth, with a mean score of 19.240, compared to 14.393 for the Kenyan sample, with a mean difference of 4.847. The t-value of 10.331 ($p<.01$) highlights a substantial and significant difference in warmth. On Gregariousness (E2), both groups showed similar levels of gregariousness, with mean scores was 15.887 for the Kenyans and 15.913 for the Indians. The mean difference (.027) was

found to be insignificant ($t\text{-value} = .057$). Another facet of extraversion is assertiveness (E3); the mean score of Indians was 16.040 and 15.147 for the Kenyan sample. The mean difference (.893) and a t-value of 2.004 ($p<.05$) indicate a significant difference in assertiveness. Activity (E4), the Indians displayed a higher activity level, with a mean score of 17.167 compared to 15.340 for the Kenyans. The mean difference (1.827) and a t-value of 4.954 ($p<.01$) indicates a significant difference in activity. Excitement Seeking (E5), the Indians scored significantly higher in excitement seeking, with a mean score of 18.880 compared to the Kenyan's mean score of 15.787. The mean difference (3.093) and a t value of 8.375 ($p<.01$) imply a significant difference in excitement seeking. Positive Emotions (E6), there was no significant difference in positive emotions between the two groups, with a mean score of 19.020 for the Kenyans and 18.213 for the Indians. A mean difference of (.807) and a t-value of 1.841 ($p<.067$) indicate that this difference is not statistically significant.

Table 2

Coefficients of correlations between PRL and Extraversion

Sample	Variables	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	Total
Kenyans								
	PRL	.151	.162*	.238**	.129	.143	.178*	.280**
Indians								
	PRL	.175*	-.048	.018	.063	.141	.130	.143

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The results in Table 2 depict the relationship between psychologically rich life and facets of extraversion. It is observed from the results of the correlational analysis that PRL was positively correlated with gregariousness ($r = .162$, $p < .05$), assertiveness ($r = .238$, $p < .01$), and positive emotions ($r = .178$, $p < .05$), highlighting the association of these facets with psychological richness. The total score on the extraversion dimension was significantly and positively correlated with psychologically rich life ($r = .280$, $p < .01$) for Kenyans. In case of Indians PRL showed a significant positive correlation with Warmth ($r = .175$, $p < .05$),

implying that affectionate and friendly individuals tend to have richer psychological lives. The rest of the facets of extraversion were not found to be significantly associated with PRL.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate notable differences in the psychologically rich lives of Indians and Kenyans. Overall, Kenyans tend to score higher on the psychologically rich life scale compared to Indians. Extraversion is associated with energy, positive emotions, and the tendency to seek stimulation. In this study, the facets of

extraversion included warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement-seeking, and positive emotions. Among these six facets, significant differences were observed in four—warmth, assertiveness, activity, and excitement-seeking—between Indians and Kenyans.

Indians scored significantly higher in warmth and activity, suggesting that they tend to have warmer relationships and more dynamic lifestyles. However, the gregariousness scores did not show significant differences, indicating similar levels of sociability and preference for social interactions in both groups. Both Kenyans and Indians exhibit comparable levels of gregariousness, characterized by a preference for the company of others and a dislike of being alone. Conversely, assertiveness presented a significant difference; Indians scored higher than Kenyans. This may reflect cultural distinctions in how leadership, influence, and control are expressed. In Indian culture, hierarchical social structures are prominent, and assertiveness might be culturally encouraged as a means to effectively navigate social and professional environments (Tripathi & Cervone, 2008). There was no significant difference in positive emotions, suggesting that both groups experience similar levels of joy and enthusiasm. Research by Diener et al. (2010) indicates that subjective well-being and positive emotions can be maintained through strong social networks, which are prevalent in both groups studied. These differences underline the need to consider cultural influences when interpreting personality traits across populations.

Further, the results of the correlational analysis suggest that associations of facets of extraversion with psychologically rich life are different for Indians and Kenyans. For Kenyans, PRL was positively correlated with gregariousness, assertiveness and positive emotions, suggesting that individuals who are more outgoing, assertive and cheerful tend to perceive their lives as psychologically rich. This aligned with the idea that extraverts, through their active and varied social lives, encounter diverse and enriching experiences, contributing to a psychologically rich life (Oishi & Westgate, 2021). In Kenya's social environment, where community engagement is an integral part, extroverts may find their lives more varied and

stimulating, thus perceiving it as psychologically rich. While for Indians, a psychologically rich life positively correlates with warmth, this suggests that Indians who are warm and sociable perceive their lives as psychologically rich. Research has shown that social connections and positive relationships contribute to a more varied and enriching life experience, which is a core aspect of a PRL (Oishi & Westgate, 2021). In India, where social relationships play a key role in personal fulfilment, warm and sociable people may have access to more diverse and meaningful life experiences, contributing to a richer psychological life. Overall, the facets of extraversion have positive relation with psychologically rich life. Earlier research has reported a positive association between satisfaction and extraversion (Malvaso & Kang, 2022). Extraverted people tend to report higher life satisfaction and positive affect due to their active social engagement, varied life experiences, and emotional resilience (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Triandis, 2001). Thus, the role of extraversion in psychological life among Indians and Kenyans reflects the interplay of cultural norms, societal values, and personality traits. While both countries are collectivist to varying degrees, their unique cultural contexts may influence and shape how extraversion is expressed. Further cultural nuances, such as the balance between tradition and modernity, might further influence how extroverts navigate their psychological richness in these societies.

Conclusion

The facets of extraversion play distinct roles in shaping psychologically rich life among Indians and Kenyans. For Kenyans, three extraversion facets- gregariousness, activity, and excitement-seeking- are positively associated with a psychologically rich life, whereas for Indians, only one facet, i.e. warmth, is positively related to psychological richness. Thus, these differences in facets of extraversion and their relationship with psychologically rich life among Indians and Kenyans have meaningful implications for designing culturally sensitive interventions aimed at fostering psychological richness and overall well-being.

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