

Individual Differences in Affective Neuroscience Personality Traits Predict Several Dimensions of Psychological Wellbeing. A Cross-Sectional Study in Healthy Subjects

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Abstract : Decades of cross-species affective neuroscience research by Panksepp and others have identified basic evolutionarily preserved subcortical emotional systems that humans share with mammals and many vertebrates. These primary emotional systems encode unconditional affective responses and contribute to the development of personality traits throughout ontogenesis and interactions with the environment. The Affective Neuroscience Personality Scale (ANPS) measures individual differences in affective personality traits associated with the basic emotional systems of CARE, PLAY, SEEKING, SADNESS, FEAR, and ANGER, along with Spirituality, which is a more cognitively and socially refined expression of affectivity. Though the ANPS's power to predict human psychological distress has been documented, to the best of our knowledge, its predictive power for psychological wellbeing has not been explored. This study therefore investigates the relationship between affective neuroscience traits and psychological wellbeing facets. Because the emotional systems are thought to influence cognitively-mediated mental processes about the self and the world, understanding the relationship between affective traits and psychological wellbeing is particularly relevant to understanding the affective dimensions of health. In a cross-sectional study, healthy participants (n = 402) completed the ANPS and the Psychological Wellbeing scale. Multiple regressions revealed that each facet of wellbeing was explained by two to four affective traits, and each trait was significantly related to at least one aspect of wellbeing. Specifically, SEEKING predicted all the wellbeing facets, except for positive relations; CARE predicted personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance; PLAY and, inversely, ANGER predicted positive relations; SADNESS inversely predicted autonomy, while FEAR inversely predicted purpose in life. SADNESS and FEAR inversely predicted environmental mastery and self-acceptance. Finally, Spirituality predicted personal growth, positive relations, and self-acceptance. These findings are the first to show the relationship between affective neuroscience personality traits and psychological wellbeing. They also call attention to the distinctive role of FEAR and PANIC traits in psychological wellbeing facets, thereby complementing or even overcoming the traditional personality approach to neuroticism as a global trait.

Keywords : affective neuroscience, individual differences, personality, wellbeing

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