Mind Over Matter? Mindfulness Matters in Big Five Traits Predicting Resilience

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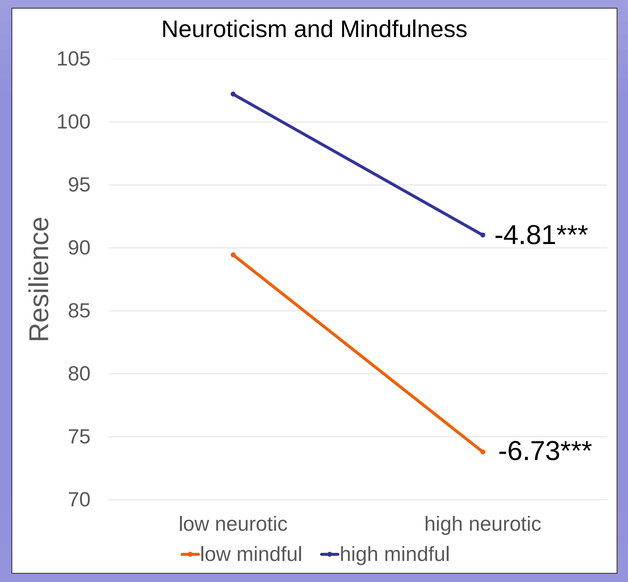
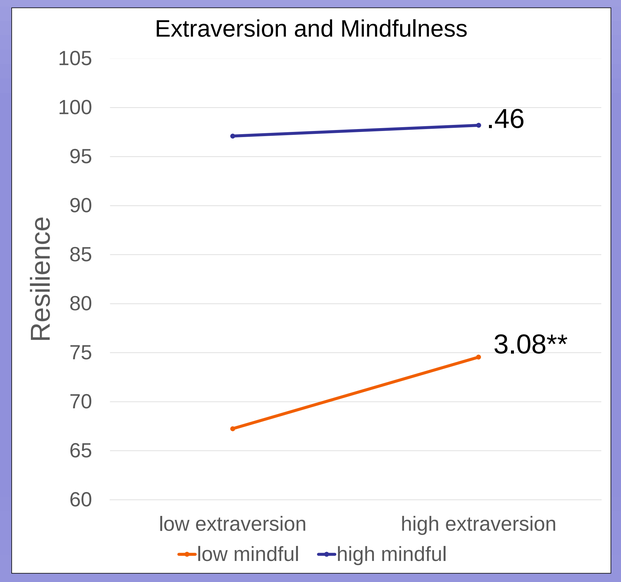
Introduction

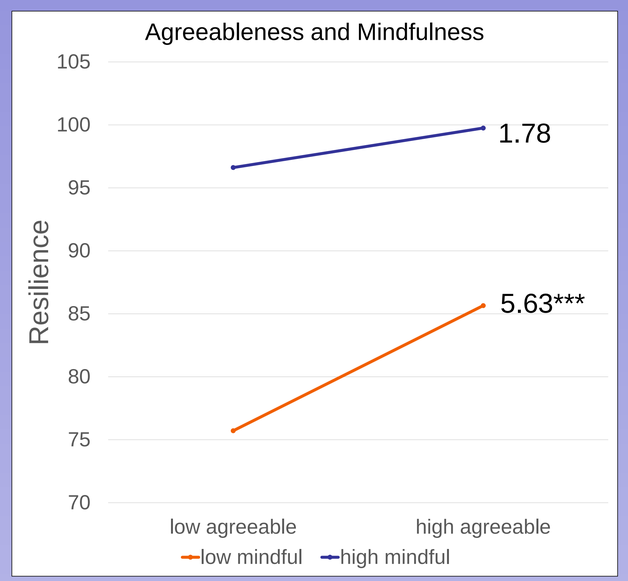
- Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment on purpose and without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).
- Conscientiousness displays a strong, positive relationship with mindfulness. Of the Big Five personality traits, conscientiousness is the least likely to be investigated with respect to mindfulness (Gulik, 2009).
- Mindfulness is expected to be positively related to agreeableness with both constructs holding similar tendencies such as care, empathy, and understanding towards others.
- Resilience has been found to be negatively correlated to neuroticism and positively correlated to the rest of the Big Five traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion) (Oshio, Taku, Hirano, & Saeed, 2018).
- Mindfulness is a beneficial way to relate to events and conditions. This view overlaps with resilience or inner strength requiring an investigation of the unique aspects of mindfulness. Resilience highlights aspects of personality that are beneficial for one's health (Grevenstein, Aguilar-Raab, & Bluemke, 2018).

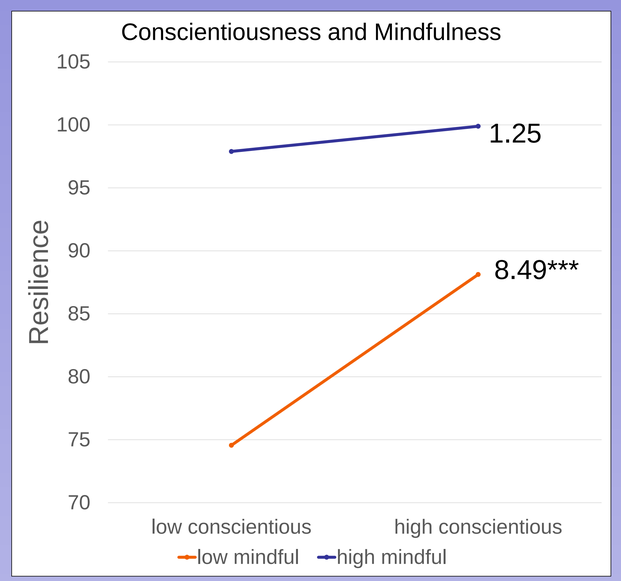
This study focuses on how Big Five personality traits, resilience, and mindfulness are related.

- **H1: We expect conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion to be positively associated—and neuroticism negatively associated—with resilience.**
- **H2: We expect mindfulness to be positively related to resilience.**
- **H3: We expect associations between Big Five and resilience to be different based on mindfulness levels, such that they will be stronger when people are highly mindful.**









Methods

Participants and Procedure

The final sample (N=205) was 59.5% male. Most participants (70.24%) identified as White or Caucasian (*n*=144), 20.49% as Asian (*n*=42), 8.29% as Black or African-American (*n*=17), one participant identified as Indian (.49%) and one participant selected "Other, please specify" and did not write anything in the prompt (.49%). Most (95.61%) of the sample identified as non-Hispanic (*n*=196) and 4.39% identified as Hispanic (*n*=9). Participants registered to the online platform *Amazon's Mechanical Turk* found and completed surveys on mindfulness, personality, and resilience. Participants were compensated 2 dollars for their time.

Measures

Mindfulness The Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire - State was used to measure different aspects of state mindfulness. Facets include: observe, act with awareness, describe, non-judge and non-react (Baer et al., 2006). Example items include: "During the previous task I noticed changes in my body, such as whether my breathing slows down or speeds up," and "At the present moment, I find that I am able to stay focused on what I am doing, without daydreaming, worrying or getting distracted." The scale is calculated as a sum for the total scale and for each subscale. The scale, exhibited satisfactory internal consistency in the present study (α = .71).

Personality The Big Five Short Form scale was used to measure participants' extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, each on a spectrum (Lang et al., 2011). This version has been shortened from 41 items to 15 (Lang et al., 2011). Participants indicate their agreement 1-5 with each item, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. Example items include "I see myself as someone who worries a lot" and "I see myself as someone who is talkative." The neuroticism subscale (α = .86) and the extraversion subscale (α = .86) each exhibited good internal consistency, while the conscientiousness (α = .67) and agreeableness subscale (α = .62) displayed poor internal consistency.

Resilience The Resilience in Midlife scale was used to measure participants' resilience. The scale consists of 25 items aimed at assessing participants ability to overcome challenges common to the midlife (Ryan & Caltabiano., 2009). Participants are asked to indicate their agreement with each statement using a 1-5 scale, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. Example items include: "Can find a solution to a problem" and "easily discouraged by failure" (reverse scored). The scale was found to be internally consistent in the present study (α = .92).

Multiple Regression Table

Big five variable	Predictor	*b*	*t*	*p*
Conscientiousness	Conscientiousness	4.87	4.74	<.001
	Mindfulness	0.98	11.16	<.001
	Conscientiousness * Mindfulness	**-.40**	**-4.64**	**<.001**
Openness	Openness	.15	.18	.86
	Mindfulness	1.40	5.14	<.001
	Openness * Mindfulness	-.06	-.86	.39
Extraversion	Extraversion	1.77	2.60	.01
	Mindfulness	1.08	12.01	<.001
	Extraversion * Mindfulness	**-.15**	**-2.29**	**.02**
Neuroticism	Neuroticism	-5.77	-9.70	<.001
	Mindfulness	.83	10.86	<.001
	Neuroticism * Mindfulness	**.11**	**2.21**	**.03**
Agreeableness	Agreeableness	3.70	4.05	<.001
	Mindfulness	0.98	10.77	<.001
	Agreeableness * Mindfulness	**-0.21**	**-2.83**	**.01**

Results & Discussion

- Big Five traits were related to resilience as expected.
- Mindfulness was also positively related to resilience.
- The association between the Big Five traits and resilience was moderated by mindfulness for all except openness.
- Generally, when people are mindful, the level of Big Five trait is not related to resilience. Mindfulness matters!
- The one exception is with neuroticism, suggesting that even among mindful folks, neuroticism is related to lower resilience.
- For extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, the Big Five trait was related to higher resilience only when people were not mindful.
- These results suggest that mindfulness is a trait that allows individuals who are exhibiting positive qualities of one these Big Five personality traits (i.e. high conscientiousness, high agreeableness, high extraversion or low neuroticism) to be more resilient.
- Future research should test with different outcomes (e.g., quality of life, well-being, depression/mental health).

Selected References

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