Integrating traits and states: Concurrent and lagged effects of counterdispositional extraversion on vitality.

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Publication date:
2018

Citation for published version (APA):
INTRODUCTION

There are two contrasting theories on the effects of state extraversion on wellbeing. The first states that people’s wellbeing increases when they behave in an extraverted manner, irrespective of their trait level of extraversion (Fleeson et al., 2002). The second theory states that behaving concordant to one’s trait is innate and thus requires less energy, whereas deviations from the trait level—also known as counterdispositional behaviors— are effortful, exhaust limited self-regulatory resources and therefore lead to depleted levels of wellbeing (Zelenski et al., 2012). In this study, we examine the possibility that both effects can simultaneously coexist.

Drawing on Leikas and Ilmarinen (2016), who found that higher levels of extraversion related to immediate increases in affect but also to later fatigue, we expect higher levels of state extraversion to concurrently relate to increased levels of vitality, whereas deviations from one’s trait level would later lead to depleted levels of vitality.

METHODS

Procedure & sample:
67 Belgian professionals
46% male; average age 39.6 years

Experience sampling study:
5 consecutive working days, 6 times per day
Reported momentary levels of extraversion and vitality
82.8% response rate (N = 1664 observations)

Measures:
• The 8-item extraversion Mini-Marker Scale (Saucier, 1994)
• The 4-item Vitality Scale (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992)

Analysis:
Data were analyzed using multilevel polynomial regression analysis – lme4 package for R (Bates, Mächler, Bolker & Walker, 2015)

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows that concurrent within-person fluctuations in state extraversion were positively associated with vitality, a finding that held true across the different levels of trait extraversion. However, when looking at delayed effects (i.e., one hour later), deviations from one’s trait extraversion level were related to decreases in vitality and this again held true across the different levels of trait extraversion (Figure 2).

Our results nuance the idea that acting extraverted is as ‘good’ as being extraverted. Rather, and in line with Leikas & Ilmarinen (2016), we found that engaging in extraverted behaviors is associated with high vitality in the short-term, however if these extraverted behaviors are not congruent with one’s trait, these counterdispositional behaviors backfire, thus leading later to depleted levels of vitality.

CONCLUSIONS