



# The contributions of personality and emotional intelligence to resiliency



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## ABSTRACT

Two studies report on the contribution of emotional intelligence to self-reported resiliency beyond that accounted for by the three most often cited contemporary personality trait models. The Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (RYSA), Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF), Big Five Questionnaire (BFQ), Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP), the HEXACO-60, and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised Short Form (EPQ-RS) were administered to 186 Italian university students and 189 Italian adult workers. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that EI accounted for additional variance in resiliency beyond that offered by each of the four personality trait models for both samples.

## 1. Introduction

Young adults are faced with many challenges in the transition from adolescence to adulthood that vary from attending university or entering the world of work to changes in relationships and planning for the future (Prince-Embury, Saklofske, & Nordstokke, 2017). Post-secondary education produces its own stressful experiences that may include managing increased independence and establishing new relationships to added pressures to achieve and choosing a career (Galatzer-Levy, Burton, & Bonanno, 2012; Stelnicki, Nordstokke, & Saklofske, 2015). Upon entering the work world, the rapid and uncertain changes and more frequent job and career transitions have resulted in additional stress in most all occupations (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2010). Resiliency can be considered as a key resource for managing the stress and strains of everyday life (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2015; Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2015; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014a, 2014b).

Personal resiliency describes the person's capacity to manage challenges and difficulties in all stages and areas of life and to 'bounce back' following adversity (Masten, 2001, 2014; Masten et al., 2004; Masten & Wright, 2009). Masten (2001, 2014) underscores that resiliency is based in fundamental systems of human functioning and represents an adaptive resource for individuals confronted with stressors and difficult situations. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) differentiate between personal resiliency (Block & Block, 1980; Block & Kremen, 1996), described as a personality characteristic, and resilience as a dynamic process of the interaction between individual characteristics and the environmental conditions (Masten, 2007, 2014).

While there are a number of definitions and scales that purport to measure resiliency (Prince-Embury, Saklofske, & Veseley, 2015), a more recent model that offers both an operational definition and measures of resilience and personal resiliency has been developed by Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, Prince-Embury and Saklofske (2013, 2014) and Prince-Embury et al. (2017). The model of personal resiliency (Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) underlying both the child/adolescent and adult scales is founded on previously identified aspects of personal experience associated with three core developmental systems: Sense of Mastery, Sense of Relatedness, and Emotional Reactivity. Sense of Mastery (Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) includes optimism, self-efficacy, and adaptability and can be considered a key protective resource of personal resiliency. Sense of Relatedness underscores the importance of relationships and relational ability and is comprised of trust, perceived access to support, and comfort with and tolerance of others; it is also described as a protective resource. Emotional Reactivity is defined as the rapidity and the strength of an individual's negative emotional response (Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981). The three functional aspects of emotional reactivity are sensitivity, length of recovery time from emotional upset, and impairment or degree of disrupted functioning related to emotional upset. In contrast to mastery and relatedness, emotional reactivity constitutes a vulnerability factor for individuals. This framework is reflected in the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA; Prince-Embury, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) and has more recently been extended to the Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (Prince-Embury et al., 2017) for use with older adolescents and young adults.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a much studied and important

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individual differences construct within the positive psychology literature regardless of the theoretical framework (i.e., trait vs. ability) or the measure used to assess it (e.g., Stough, Saklofske, & Parker, 2009). As anticipated, a positive association has been reported between resilience assessed with the RSYA (Prince-Embury et al., 2017) and trait emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). In particular, the two protective factors correlated positively with trait EI whereas the vulnerability factor of emotional reactivity correlated negatively with EI (Prince-Embury et al., 2017). Furthermore, personality reflected in such contemporary trait models as Eysenck's (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) super 3, Costa and McCrae's (1992) Big 5 and Lee and Ashton's (2004) 6 factor HEXACO model have been extensively examined in relation to EI (e.g., Andrei, Siegling, Aloe, Baldaro, & Petrides, 2016; Petrides, Siegling, & Saklofske, 2016; Siegling, Vesely, Petrides, & Saklofske, 2015) although to a lesser extent with resiliency (Prince-Embury et al., 2017).

There is a robust and complex relationship between the various personality factors and EI that requires further analysis to determine the contribution of each in a description of resiliency. This is partially due to the fact that current personality measures do not necessarily assess exactly the same traits even though they are similarly labeled as conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness, and extraversion. Adding to this, it has been argued that EI and personality are highly correlated (Van der Linden, Tsaousis, & Petrides, 2012) and that EI should be regarded as a personality trait (Petrides et al., 2016; Petrides, Furnham, & Mavroveli, 2007). Thus it may be suggested that EI would not contribute substantially to predicting variance in related variables beyond personality, especially if using a scale such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue; Petrides, 2009) which also includes some facets that would seem to correlate or overlap with the RSYA model of resiliency (e.g., adaptability, emotion regulation). In particular, there have not been empirical studies to determine if trait emotional intelligence adds incremental variance beyond that accounted for by personality traits in relation to resiliency.

The two studies presented in this paper examine the relationships between resiliency and both personality traits and EI with samples of Italian university students (study 1) and Italian workers (study 2). Prince-Embury and Saklofske (2013) emphasize that personal resiliency is not a personality trait, assessed for example via the Big Five, but more a set of resources that may be influenced by personality traits. Here we hypothesized that trait EI will add incremental variance beyond that accounted for by different personality trait models.

## 2. Study 1 and study 2

### 2.1. Material and methods

#### 2.1.1. Participants

Participants in study 1 were 186 Italian university students (female: 56.45%; male: 43.55%; mean age = 23.18 years,  $SD = 4.08$ ; first year: 17.74%, second year: 35.48%, third year: 22.59%, fourth year: 12.90%, fifth year: 11.29%).

Study 2 participants were 189 Italian workers employed at different public and private organizations in the Tuscany region (female: 55.03%; males: 44.97%; mean age = 43.64 years,  $SD = 10.82$ ) and drawn from various occupations (managers: 13.76%; clerks: 45.50%; professionals such as educators and lawyers: 19.57%; blue collar workers: 21.17%) and education levels (master - university degree: 40.74%; high school diploma: 46.03%; middle school diploma: 13.23%).

In both studies, participants completed the Italian versions of the RSYA, the Big Five Questionnaire (BFQ), the Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP), the HEXACO-60, the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised Short Form (EPQ-RS), and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF).

#### 2.1.2. Measures

The Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (RSYA; Prince-Embury et al., 2017) contains 50 items that measure Sense of Relatedness, Mastery and Emotional Reactivity using a 5-point Likert scale. A single measure termed the Resiliency-Vulnerability Index (RVI) was used in this study (see Prince-Embury, 2013). The Italian version was developed by the first author following the standard translation-back translation procedures and validated in a separate study (Wilson et al., in press).

The *Big Five Questionnaire* (BFQ; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Borgogni, 1993) is composed of 132 items assessing the five major trait personality factors using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

The Italian version by Di Fabio and Saklofske (in press a) of the HEXACO-60 (Ashton & Lee, 2009) is composed of 60 items responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

The 20 item Italian version (Di Fabio and Saklofske, in press b) of the Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP, Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006) employs a 5 points response format.

The Italian version (Dazzi, Pedrabissi, & Santinello, 2004) of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised Short Form (EPQ-RS, Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985) includes 48 items with a Yes/No response format.

The Italian version (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2011) of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006) is composed of 30 items drawn from the 153 item TEIQue.

Means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for all scales are presented in Table 1.

#### 2.1.3. Procedure

The same procedure for administering the questionnaires was followed for both university students and workers. The questionnaires were group administered by trained psychologist and in accordance with Italian Privacy Law. The order of administration was counter-balanced to control the effects of presentation.

**Table 1**  
Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas - university students and workers.

	Study 1 university students <i>N</i> = 186			Study 2 workers <i>N</i> = 189		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
RSYA Resiliency-Vulnerability Index	4.86	4.44	0.86	5.56	4.71	0.87
BFQ Extraversion	75.71	9.25	0.73	76.04	16.60	0.77
BFQ Agreeableness	77.35	9.30	0.76	79.85	12.99	0.78
BFQ Conscientiousness	79.83	10.15	0.78	80.58	17.87	0.77
BFQ Emotional stability	68.76	11.82	0.84	73.66	22.81	0.89
BFQ Openness	80.41	9.62	0.73	78.74	22.81	0.79
MINI-IPIP Extraversion	11.53	2.56	0.71	11.72	3.25	0.71
MINI-IPIP Agreeableness	14.83	3.05	0.73	14.88	2.94	0.73
MINI-IPIP Conscientiousness	12.58	3.08	0.71	13.05	3.39	0.72
MINI-IPIP Neuroticism	11.51	3.14	0.72	10.86	4.00	0.72
MINI-IPIP Intellect imagination	14.46	3.23	0.72	13.55	3.07	0.73
HEXACO Honesty-Humility	32.72	5.99	0.76	36.56	6.15	0.72
HEXACO Emotionality	33.27	6.54	0.79	32.72	6.15	0.83
HEXACO Extraversion	31.99	6.06	0.77	33.22	6.30	0.75
HEXACO Agreeableness	30.26	5.27	0.75	31.92	7.05	0.72
HEXACO Conscientiousness	33.22	5.77	0.75	33.90	8.19	0.73
HEXACO Openness to Experience	34.45	6.17	0.76	32.38	8.43	0.77
EPQ Extraversion	7.77	2.97	0.76	7.56	3.21	0.83
EPQ Neuroticism	5.42	3.03	0.78	4.79	3.37	0.85
EPQ Psychoticism	3.55	2.30	0.72	3.22	2.09	0.72
TEIQue Total	139.53	22.17	0.89	139.77	22.95	0.85

**Table 2**  
Correlations among personality traits, trait emotional intelligence, resilience in university students and workers.

	RSYA mastery		RSYA relatedness		RSYA reactiveness		RSYA Resiliency-Vulnerability Index (RSI)	
	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2
	university students N = 186	workers N = 189	university students N = 186	workers N = 189	university students N = 186	workers N = 189	university students N = 186	workers N = 189
BFQ Extraversion	0.47**	0.34**	0.32**	0.19**	-0.11	-0.06	0.32**	0.20**
BFQ Agreeableness	0.34**	0.23**	0.49**	0.30**	-0.29**	-0.20**	0.45**	0.30**
BFQ Conscientiousness	0.39**	0.22**	0.23**	0.16*	-0.29**	-0.13	0.40**	0.21**
BFQ Emotional stability	0.29**	0.32**	0.13	0.23**	-0.45**	-0.47**	0.45**	0.52**
BFQ Openness	0.32**	0.35**	0.18*	0.25**	-0.34**	-0.13	0.40**	0.27**
MINI-IPIP Extraversion	0.23**	0.24**	0.27**	0.32**	-0.15*	-0.18*	0.26**	0.30**
MINI-IPIP Agreeableness	0.26**	0.19**	0.29**	0.27**	-0.27**	-0.07	0.36**	0.19*
MINI-IPIP Conscientiousness	0.28**	0.17*	0.13	0.16*	-0.23**	-0.17*	0.29**	0.22**
MINI-IPIP Neuroticism	-0.35**	-0.39**	-0.38**	-0.21**	0.42**	0.56**	-0.52**	-0.60**
MINI-IPIP Intellect imagination	0.14	0.14	0.06	0.14	-0.10	-0.01	0.13	0.09
HEXACO Honesty-Humility	0.11	0.27**	0.17*	0.29**	-0.09	-0.33**	0.15*	0.42**
HEXACO Emotionality	-0.27**	-0.15**	-0.06	-0.03	0.21**	0.33**	-0.25**	-0.28**
HEXACO Extraversion	0.61**	0.54**	0.48**	0.43**	-0.22**	-0.20**	0.49**	0.43**
HEXACO Agreeableness	0.07	0.05	0.21**	0.09	-0.27**	-0.32**	0.28**	0.29**
HEXACO Conscientiousness	0.32**	0.19*	0.18*	0.16*	-0.31**	-0.14*	0.37**	0.21**
HEXACO Openness to Experience	0.27**	0.22**	0.18*	0.17*	-0.14	-0.13	0.24**	0.21**
EPQ Extraversion	0.44**	0.37**	0.49**	0.42**	-0.06	-0.12	0.33**	0.32**
EPQ Neuroticism	-0.53**	-0.34**	-0.32**	-0.27**	0.51**	0.51**	-0.63**	-0.56**
EPQ Psychoticism	-0.20**	-0.13	-0.25**	-0.28**	0.12	0.10	-0.22**	-0.19**
TEIQue Well-being	0.70**	0.50**	0.52**	0.32**	-0.38**	-0.38**	0.65**	0.53**
TEIQue Self-control	0.45**	0.34**	0.28**	0.13	-0.45**	-0.49**	0.55**	0.51**
TEIQue Emotionality	0.42**	0.40**	0.45**	0.40**	-0.36**	-0.23**	0.52**	0.41**
TEIQue Sociability	0.45**	0.39**	0.39**	0.39**	-0.25**	-0.21**	0.44**	0.38**
TEIQue Total	0.69**	0.55**	0.55**	0.42**	-0.45**	-0.40**	0.70**	0.59**

Note. BFQ = Big Five Questionnaire; MINI-IPIP = Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP); EPQ = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ); TEIQue Total = Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Total score; RSYA = Resiliency Scale for Young Adults.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .  
\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

2.1.4. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each measure both for university students and workers (see Table 1). Correlations (Pearson's  $r$ ; see Table 2) followed by hierarchical regressions were carried for each of the four personality measures together with trait emotional intelligence in the prediction of resiliency and are reported in Tables 3–6.

**Table 3**  
Hierarchical regression. The contributions of BFQ (first step) and trait emotional intelligence TEIQue-SF (second step) to resilience (RSYA).

	Study 1	Study 2
	N = 186	N = 189
	university students	workers
	RSYA	RSYA
	$\beta$	$\beta$
Step 1		
BFQ Extraversion	0.13*	0.08
BFQ Agreeableness	0.30***	0.18*
BFQ Conscientiousness	0.17**	0.08
BFQ Emotional stability	0.40***	0.43***
BFQ Openness	0.21**	0.13*
Step 2		
TEIQue Total	0.47***	0.42***
$R^2$ step 1	0.51***	0.33***
$\Delta R^2$ step 2	0.10***	0.14***
$R^2$ total	0.61***	0.47***

Note. BFQ = Big Five Questionnaire; TEIQue Total = Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Total score; RSYA = Resiliency Scale for Young Adults.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .  
\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .  
\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 4**  
Hierarchical regression. The contributions of MINI-IPIP (first step) and trait emotional intelligence TEIQue-SF (second step) to resilience (RSYA).

	Study 1	Study 2
	N = 186	N = 189
	university students	workers
	RSYA	RSYA
	$\beta$	$\beta$
Step 1		
MINI-IPIP Extraversion	0.23**	0.19**
MINI-IPIP Agreeableness	0.23***	0.15*
MINI-IPIP Conscientiousness	0.21***	0.11
MINI-IPIP Neuroticism	-0.48***	-0.54***
MINI-IPIP Intellect imagination	0.08	0.07
Step 2		
TEIQue Total	0.46***	0.34***
$R^2$ step 1	0.46***	0.44***
$\Delta R^2$ step 2	0.11***	0.08***
$R^2$ total	0.57***	0.52***

Note. MINI-IPIP = Mini International Personality Item Pool Scale (Mini-IPIP); TEIQue Total = Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Total score; RSYA = Resiliency Scale for Young Adults.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .  
\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .  
\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

3. Results

3.1. Study 1: hierarchical regressions: results for Italian university students

Hierarchical regression models for each of the four personality trait scales (BFQ, MIMI-IPIP, HEXACO-60, EPQ-RS) were entered at the first step followed by trait EI at the second step and are presented in Tables

**Table 5**  
Hierarchical regression. The contributions of HEXACO (first step) and trait emotional intelligence TEIQue-SF (second step) to resilience (RSYA).

	Study 1	Study 2
	N = 186	N = 189
	university students	workers
	RSYA	RSYA
	β	β
Step 1		
HEXACO Honesty-Humility	0.01	0.29***
HEXACO Emotionality	− 0.18*	− 0.15*
HEXACO Extraversion	0.35***	0.31***
HEXACO Agreeableness	0.28***	0.15*
HEXACO Conscientiousness	0.24***	0.08**
HEXACO Openness to Experience	0.08	0.05
Step 2		
TeiQue Total	0.59***	0.40***
R <sup>2</sup> step 1	0.41***	0.36***
ΔR <sup>2</sup> step 2	0.17***	0.09***
R <sup>2</sup> total	0.58***	0.45***

Note. TEIQue Total = Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Total score; RSYA = Resiliency Scale for Young Adults.

\* p < 0.05.  
\*\* p < 0.01.  
\*\*\* p < 0.001.

**Table 6**  
Hierarchical regression. The contributions of EPQ (first step) and trait emotional intelligence TEIQue-SF (second step) to resilience (RSYA).

	Study 1	Study 2
	N = 186	N = 189
	university students	workers
	RSYA	RSYA
	β	β
Step 1		
EPQ Extraversion	0.11*	0.15**
EPQ Neuroticism	− 0.58***	− 0.51***
EPQ Psychoticism	− 0.15*	− 0.13*
Step 2		
TEIQue Total	0.52***	0.39***
R <sup>2</sup> step 1	0.43***	0.36***
ΔR <sup>2</sup> step 2	0.15***	0.10***
R <sup>2</sup> total	0.58***	0.46***

Note. EPQ = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ); TEIQue Total = Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Total score; RSYA = Resiliency Scale for Young Adults.

\* p < 0.05.  
\*\* p < 0.01.  
\*\*\* p < 0.001.

3, 4, 5, 6. The four personality measures accounted for between 41 and 51% of the variance with EI adding another 10–17% resulting in the overall personality – EI models accounting for 51 to 61% of the variance in the RVI.

3.2. Study 2: hierarchical regressions: results for Italian workers

The results of four different hierarchical regression analyses, each employing a different personality trait measure (BFQ, MIMI-IPIP, HEXACO-60, EPQ-RS) entered as the first step and trait EI at the second step, are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5, 6. In slight contrast to the student sample, the four personality measures accounted for between 33 and 44% of the variance and EI added another 8–14%. This led to the overall model accounting for 45 to 52% of the variance in the RVI which again is lower than that reported for the student group.

4. Discussion

The two studies examined the relationship of resiliency, assessed by the RVI obtained from the RSYA, and four different personality trait measures and trait EI with two samples of Italian university students and workers. As it was expected that the most of the personality factors assessed by each of these questionnaires would be significantly related to self-reported resiliency, each of the factors from the four personality scales were correlated with the RVI and also the 3 resiliency factors. There was some variability noted in these relationships albeit the patterns of coefficients were generally similar for both students and workers. More importantly, no matter which of the personality scales were employed, trait emotional intelligence also added incremental variance beyond that accounted for by each of the four different personality trait models, again in both Italian samples. This supports the argument that the 3–5-6 factors comprising the most often used current personality scales and EI while correlated, are not simply redundant or will produce exactly the same relationships in relation to resiliency (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014b; Saklofske, Austin, & Minski, 2003). These results are further in line with the literature (Prince-Embury & Saklofske, 2013) that describes personal resiliency as a set of individual resources associated with personality traits but also trait EI.

Limitations of this study include the relatively small samples that may not be fully representative of either the student or workers groups, so that further research is needed with both larger and other samples (e.g., high school students; elderly adults). The short form of the TEIQue does allow for an analysis of total EI and the four facets but it would be of value to examine in more detail the relationship with personality and resiliency by including each of the EI subscales. Further, these results should be confirmed in other national contexts. Replication studies should further examine the effectiveness of including both EI and personality factors in programs intended to enhance resiliency (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2011; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014b). In summary, these findings add to the rapidly developing literature on personal resiliency and its relationships with both personality traits and trait emotional intelligence.

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