

RESILIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: DIFFERENCES FOR AFFECTIVE PROFILES IN ITALIAN MIDDLE AND LATE ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study was focused on the differences for affective profiles on dimensions of resilience and factors of psychological well-being in a sample of Italian middle and late adolescents. We used the Italian Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (De Caroli & Sagone, 2014a), the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), and the Positive (PA) and Negative (NA) Affect Scale (Di Fabio & Bucci, 2015). We obtained four different combinations of affective profiles: self-fulfilling (high PA and low NA), low affective (low PA and low NA), high affective (high PA and high NA), and self-destructive profile (low PA and high NA). Results: adolescents with self-fulfilling profile reported higher resilience (in detail, sense of humor, competence, adaptability, and engagement) and psychological well-being (that is, autonomy, purpose in life, self-acceptance) than the others. Additionally, boys had greater self-fulfilling profile and scored higher in sense of humor and adaptability than girls, while girls had greater high affective and self-destructive profiles and scored higher in control and engagement than boys. Future developmental and educational research could deepen other protective factors of self-fulfilling profile in adolescence, as self-efficacy and optimism.

Key words: psychological well-being, affective profile, resilience, adolescence

INTRODUCTION: WHAT ARE THE AFFECTIVE PROFILES?

The originality of the current paper derives from the choice to study the relationships existing between resilience (De Caroli & Sagone, 2014a) and psychological well-being (Ryff, 2013) with the affective profiles (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; Archer et al., 2007; Garcia & Siddiqui, 2009a; Garcia & Moradi, 2013; Di Fabio & Bucci, 2015) in Italian middle and late adolescents, procrastinating the same type of analysis in university students or adults for future investigations.

The affective profiles have been conceptualized on the definition of Positive Affect (PA) and Negative Affect (NA), provided by Watson and his colleagues (1988) as separate and orthogonal

dimensions taking account of the propensity for these affective states to be expressed in various combinations by different individuals. These two dimensions recall the positive and negative “activation” (*arousal or emotional reactivity*) of mood states in all individuals. As briefly reported by Watson et al. (1988), “Positive Affect (PA) reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert. High PA is a state of high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement, whereas low PA is characterized by sadness and lethargy” (p.1063). On the contrary, the authors affirmed that “Negative Affect (NA) is a general dimension of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagement that subsumes various aversive mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness, with low NA being a state of calmness and serenity” (1988, p.1063). From this theoretical framework, the authors created a kind of mood questionnaire (the PANAS), formed by 20 descriptors (10 for PA and 10 for NA) for which the individuals were asked to rate (in the original version) how they felt “at the present moment”, “today”, “during the past few days”, “during the past week”, “during the past few weeks”, “during the past year”, and “in general, on the average” (Watson et al., 1988, p.1065).

On the basis of these indications, Norlander et al. (2002, 2005) and Archer et al. (2007) formulated the *affective profile model* whereby individuals are categorized into one of four affective profiles: “self-fulfilling”/“self-actualization” (high PA, low NA), “high affective” (high PA, high NA), “low affective” (low PA, low NA), and “self-destructive” (low PA, high NA). These authors have studied the differences among the affective profiles in several psychological characteristics (e.g., optimism, personality traits, self-esteem, locus of control, and so on). For example, Archer et al. (2007) found that high school students with self-fulfilling profile reported significantly more energy, optimism, and less stress than self-destructive, high affective, and low affective ones. In addition, Archer et al. (2008) found that self-fulfilling individuals reported high self-esteem, optimism, and internal locus of control, while self-destructive individuals revealed low self-esteem, pessimism, and external locus of control. More recently, in Italian context, Di Fabio and Bucci (2015) observed that high school students with self-fulfilling profile scored higher on life satisfaction, self-esteem, life meaning, and optimism than the others.

Recently, Diener et al. (2010) modified the Watson et al.’s conceptualization and measurement of positive and negative affect as emotional well-being with the positive and negative experience, including broad desirable and undesirable words that describe in general terms the feelings people approach and avoid (positive, negative, good, bad, pleasant, unpleasant, happy, sad, afraid, joyful, angry, and contented). The PANAS (*Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule*) has been substituted by the SPANE (*Scale of Positive and Negative Experience*), appreciating positive feelings, negative feelings, and affect balance. As reported by Diener and colleagues (2010), the use of general feelings allows us to assess a full range of positive and negative feelings regardless of their source and this approach seems to be the most sensible one when it is people’s subjective well-being that is of interest. Nevertheless, the PANAS and its other versions (PANAS-C for children: Laurent et al., 1999 and PANAS-X for adults: Watson & Clark, 1994) are today the most used measures of positive and negative affectivity.

Relationships between resilience and affective profiles

The scientific interest for the construct of resilience (Wagnild & Young, 1993; Hurtes & Allen, 2001; Sinclair & Oliver, 2003) during adolescence and the deepening of its psychological correlates represented the focus of this paper. Resilience is defined as the ability to overcome hardships and flourish in the face of them (Wagnild & Young, 1993; Ryff & Singer, 2003), to restore from stressful events or maintain equilibrium under significant threats (Smith et al., 2008), and to bounce back from adversities adopting positive coping strategies (Masten et al., 1999). Recently, Fletcher and

Sarkar (2013) reviewed and criticized the different approaches to the study of resilience, considering this construct as adaptive response to different adversities, ranging from ongoing daily hassles to major life events, or on the side as the results deriving from the interactive influence of psychological characteristics within the context of the stress process.

Referring to the attitudes and skills typically appreciable in resilient individuals, according to the Hurtes and Allen's contribution (2001) that we used as reference in Italian school-context (De Caroli & Sagone, 2014a), the following strength-oriented psychological dimensions emerged (pp.335-336): 1) *"the ability to read and interpret situations, people, and subtle nuances of both verbal and nonverbal communication"* (insight); 2) *"a balance between being true to oneself and accommodating to the concerns of others"* (independence); 3) the ability to *"generate options and alternatives to cope with the challenges of life"* (creativity); 4) *"the ability to laugh at oneself and to find joy in one's surroundings"* (sense of humor); 5) *"the desire and determination to take proactively charge of one's own life"* (initiative); 6) the ability to *"seek out and maintain fulfilling and healthy relationships with peers, family members, and other individuals"* (supportive relationships); finally, 7) the need to *"identify what is morally just and appropriate, independently from one's own desires"* (values orientation).

In a previous validation study of Italian-RASP, carried out with a large sample of middle and late adolescents (De Caroli & Sagone, 2014a), we applied the analysis proposed by Hurtes and Allen (2001), modifying the labels of almost all factors, except for sense of humor (e.g. "control" instead of "initiative") and grouping together some of factors (e.g. "creativity" and "insight" into the single/unique factor named "adaptability"), but maintaining the same content in order to adapt this resilient profile to Italian sample. According to our definition of this revised structure of resilience, highly resilient individuals try to figure out things they don't understand (engagement), to deal with the consequences of their actions and can change their behavior in order to match them with the situation (adaptability), tend to avoid situations where they could get into trouble and learn from their mistakes (control), are likely to know when they are good at something (competence), and tend to look for the "lighter side" of tough situations and to manage stress with sense of humor (sense of humor).

As found in the relationship between resilience and well-being in middle and late adolescents in Italian school-context (Sagone & De Caroli, 2014a), the more the adolescents are able to choose contexts suitable to personal needs, to see themselves as growing and expanding, and to perceive themselves as self-satisfied, the more they feel highly resilient. Furthermore, as previously noted in the relationship between resilience and factors of creative personality (De Caroli & Sagone, 2014a), the more the adolescents are engaged, adapted, and competent in front of adversity, the more they are likely to be curious, complexity-loving, willing to take risk, and to use mental images; in addition, the adolescents who practice their control on surroundings and use their sense of humor are likely to be curious and complexity-loving, and prone to take risk. In addition, with reference to the relationship among resilience, well-being, and coping strategies (Sagone & De Caroli, 2014b), analyzed in Italian university students, high levels of positive attitude (dispositional resilience) are correlated positively with the strategies of reinterpretation and problem solving, but negatively with avoidance coping; high levels of positive attitude are positively correlated with almost all dimensions of psychological well-being; finally, almost all dimensions of psychological well-being are correlated negatively with avoidance strategy and positively with problem solving coping. Lastly, as observed in the relationship among resilience, self-efficacy, and thinking styles (Sagone & De Caroli, 2013), adolescents who experienced high levels of resilience consider themselves able to cope with novelty in various domains of life (especially, in scholastic context) and tend to use almost all thinking styles (according to the Sternberg and Wagner's model, 1992).

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A very few studies have analyzed the association between affective profiles and resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004; Ong et al., 2006), noticing that positive affect is positively related to high resilience, while negative affect is related to low resilience. Additionally, adults with high resilience (compared to those with low resilience) engage more strongly with positive events and show elevated responsiveness to daily positive experiences (Ong, Bergeman, & Chow, 2010).

Relationships between psychological well-being and affective profiles

Psychological well-being is known as a factor of optimal functioning of each individual (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 1998) that frequently has been investigated as outcome or dependent variable by other elements (as family experiences, personality correlates, life engagement and goals), but occasionally as predictor variable or antecedent of individual positive development (Ryff, 2013). On the basis of the revisited Ryff's eudaimonic perspective (2013), the most important dimensions of psychological well-being are constituted by the following ones:

self-acceptance, consisting of self-actualization, optimal functioning, and maturity, including the awareness of personal limitations;

positive relations with other individuals, linked to the ability to express feelings of empathy and affection for human beings and to be capable of greater love and friendship, and identification with other people;

autonomy, considered as self-determination, independence, regulation of behavior through internal locus of control, and coherence with one's own personal convictions;

environmental mastery, consisting of the ability to create environments suitable to his or her healthy conditions;

purpose in life, including a sense of goal directedness and intentionality;

personal growth, defined as the realization of one's potentialities, continuing to develop oneself as a person and underlining the importance of new challenges at different moments of life.

In line with these definitions, individuals with high well-being acknowledge and accept multiple aspects of themselves, including good and bad qualities, are capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy, are able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways, are able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values, have objectives for living, and, finally, are open to new experiences, seeing themselves as growing and expanding in contrast with sense of stagnation.

This multidimensional topic has been studied in relation to the affective profiles in adolescents and young adults (Norlander, Johansson, & Bood, 2005; Archer et al., 2007; Garcia & Siddiqui, 2009a, 2009b; Garcia & Archer, 2012). As reported by Archer et al. (2007), psychological well-being was higher among self-fulfilling adolescents than all other profiles; nevertheless, self-destructive adolescents scored lower in psychological well-being than high affective ones, but not lower than low affective ones. Furthermore, Garcia and Siddiqui (2009b) examined the differences among the four affective profiles in high school students in relation to life satisfaction, psychological well-being and ability to recall positive and negative life events, observing that self-fulfilling, high affective, and low affective individuals reported a higher degree of life satisfaction, psychological well-being and recalled more positive than negative events than the self-destructive ones. More recently, Garcia, Al Nima, and Kjell (2014) investigated the differences between affective profiles in psychological well-being and harmony and how well-being and its dimensions are related to harmony within the four affective profiles; results showed that self-fulfilling individuals scored higher on the psychological well-being dimensions than the other profiles; in addition, self-destructive individuals reported the lowest levels of psychological well-being and harmony when compared with the three other profiles.

METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of the present study is to deepen the differences for affective profiles on dimensions of resilience and factors of psychological well-being in a sample of Italian middle and late adolescents, noticing the differences for age and sex.

Consistently with the general purpose, we have hypothesized that: H₁) adolescents with self-fulfilling profile will report higher levels of resilience than the others; H₂) adolescents with self-fulfilling profile will report higher levels of psychological well-being than the others.

Participants

The sample of this study consists of 265 Italian middle (n=145, 59 boys and 86 girls) and late adolescents (n=120, 61 boys and 59 girls), recruited from two State High Schools sited in Catania, Sicily (Italy). Their age range is from 14 to 19 years (M=16,3, sd=1,7).

Parental consent for the underage adolescents' participation to this study was requested and obtained in accordance with the requirements of privacy and anonymity laid down by Italian Law (Law Decree DL. 196/2003).

Measures

We administered the following measures in classroom setting: RASP, PWB, and PANAS.

Italian version of Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (RASP: De Caroli & Sagone, 2014a), a questionnaire formed by 34 statements rated according to a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (corresponding to *strongly disagree*) to 6 intervals (corresponding to *strongly agree*) grouped into five dimensions of resilient profile: (a) *sense of humor* ($\alpha=.70$; e.g., "Laughter helps me deal with stress"), (b) *competence* ($\alpha=.56$; e.g., "I know when I am good at something"), (c) *adaptability* ($\alpha=.67$; e.g., "I can change my behavior to match the situation"), (d) *engagement* ($\alpha=.65$; e.g., "I try to figure out things I do not understand"), and (e) *control* ($\alpha=.61$; e.g., "I avoid situations where I could get into trouble").

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB: Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Sagone & De Caroli, 2014a), composed by 64 statements, each valuable on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (anchored with "strongly disagree") to 6 intervals (anchored with "strongly agree") and clustered in six subscales: *autonomy* ("I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus"), *environmental mastery* ("I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life"), *purpose in life* ("I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself"), *positive relations with others* ("I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me"), *personal growth* ("I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time"), and *self-acceptance* ("I like most aspects of my personality"). In this study, we used the short version with 18 items, translated and applied to Italian context by Zani and Cicognani (1999). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to they agreed with the mentioned statements. The internal consistency of PWB was satisfactory ($=.78$).

Positive (PA) and Negative (NA) Affect Schedule (PANAS: see Terracciano et al., 2003; Di Fabio & Bucci, 2015), consisting of a list of 20 adjectives-descriptors of which 10 referred to positive affect (PA: e.g., excited, interested, and determined) and 10 to negative affect (NA: e.g., afraid, upset, and distressed); participants were asked to indicate the intensity of the affect that they experienced in a specified time frame (e.g., at the present moment, the past day, week, year, or in general) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (equal to *very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (equal to *extremely*). This scale can be used to measure state affect, dispositional or trait affect, emotional fluctuations throughout a specific period of time, or emotional responses to events. Four different combinations

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of affective profiles originate from this schedule using the median as reference: 1) self-fulfilling (high PA and low NA), 2) low affective (low PA and low NA), 3) high affective (high PA and high NA), and 4) self-destructive profile (low PA and high NA). For this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were satisfactory (.77 for PA and .78 for NA).

Data analyses

Data analyses are performed by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20) using t-tests and MANOVA. A *p*-value of .05 is used to determine statistical significance in all analyses. Sex and age-groups are used as independent variables to compute the differences in the Italian-RASP, PWB, and affective profiles; for the main hypotheses of this study, affective profiles are used as dependent variables in order to examine the differences in Italian-RASP and PWB.

RESULTS

The procedure to create the affective profiles has been originally developed by Norlander et al. (2002) and, subsequently, applied by Di Fabio and Bucci in Italian context (2015) by dividing self-reported positive affect and negative affect median scores into high and low. In the present study, the distribution of affective profiles is as follows: *n*=64 self-fulfilling (36 boys, 28 girls), *n*=77 low affective (40 boys, 37 girls), *n*=52 high affective (20 boys, 32 girls), and *n*=72 self-destructive (24 boys, 48 girls).

Differences for sex (and not for age-groups) in affective profiles ($\chi^2=9,613$, *p*=.022) are noted: so, boys have greater self-fulfilling profile than girls, while girls have greater high affective and self-destructive profiles than boys (see Table 1). In low affective profile there are similar percentages of boys and girls.

Table 1 – Percentage of boys and girls for affective profiles (n=265)

Types of affective profiles - PANAS		Boys	Girls	Total sample
Profiles	Self-fulfilling (high PA/low NA)	36	28	64
		13,6%	10,6%	24,2%
	Low affective (low PA/low NA)	40	37	77
		15,1%	14%	29,1%
	High affective (high PA/high NA)	20	32	52
	7,5%	12,1%	19,6%	
	Self-destructive (low PA/high NA)	24	48	72
		9,1%	18,1%	27,2%
Total sample		120	145	265
		45,3%	54,7%	100%

For the factors of resilience, descriptive analyses indicate that these adolescents report high mean scores in dimensions of *competence* (M=4,82, sd=,74) and *engagement* (M=4,81, sd=,65) and low mean scores in *adaptability* (M=4,29, sd=,69) and *control* (M=4,55, sd=,78). Also in this case, differences for sex (and not for age-groups) emerge: so, boys score higher in *sense of humor* (*p*=.038) and *adaptability* (*p*=.037) than girls, whereas girls score higher in *control* (*p*=.012) and *engagement* (*p*=.001) than boys (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Means differences for sex in resilience (n=265)

Factors of resilience	Sex	Mean	SD	T-tests
RASP-sense of humor	Boys	4,84	,92	2,087
	Girls	4,59	1,01	
RASP-competence	Boys	4,84	,68	Ns
	Girls	4,79	,78	
RASP-adaptability	Boys	4,38	,67	2,093
	Girls	4,21	,71	
RASP-control	Boys	4,42	,83	-2,537
	Girls	4,66	,72	
RASP-engagement	Boys	4,67	,67	-3,327
	Girls	4,93	,61	

For the dimensions of psychological well-being, descriptive analyses show that these adolescents obtain high mean scores in *personal growth* ($M=12,33$, $sd=2,04$) and *autonomy* ($M=12,19$, $sd=2,06$) and low mean scores in positive relations with others ($M=9,90$, $sd=2,24$). Sex differences are noted only in *positive relations with other people* ($t=-2,520$, $p=.012$): so, girls report higher scores ($M=10,21$, $sd=2,32$) in this dimension than boys ($M=9,53$, $sd=2,07$). Only in *environmental mastery* ($t_{em}=-2,623$, $p=.009$) and *autonomy* ($t_{aut}=-1,93$, $p=.05$) differences for age-groups are observed: so, in both dimensions, late adolescents ($M_{em}=11,46$, $sd=1,89$; $M_{aut}=12,46$, $sd=1,98$) obtain higher scores than middle ones ($M_{em}=10,83$, $sd=2,02$; $M_{aut}=11,97$, $sd=2,10$).

Relations of affective profiles with RASP and PWB

In relation to the H_1 , results indicate that adolescents with self-fulfilling profile report higher levels of resilience ($F_{(3, 261)}=16,560$, $p<.001$) and, in detail, *sense of humor* ($F_{(3, 261)}=8,051$, $p<.001$) and *adaptability* ($F_{(3, 261)}=10,878$, $p<.001$) than the others (see Table 3), except for *control*. Moreover, both adolescents with self-fulfilling and those with high affective profile report higher *competence* ($F_{(3, 261)}=14,489$, $p<.001$) and *engagement* ($F_{(3, 261)}=6,583$, $p<.001$) than the others (see Table 3). In relation to the H_2 , results reveal that self-fulfilling adolescents report higher scores on psychological well-being ($F_{(3, 261)}=4,317$, $p=.005$) and, in detail, *autonomy* ($p=.018$), *purpose in life* ($p=.013$), and *self-acceptance* ($p=.001$) than the others (see Table 4).

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Table 3 – Means differences in resilience for affective profiles

Factors of resilience	Profiles	M	SD	$F_{(3, 261)}$
RASP-sense of humor	Self-fulfilling	5,03	,87	8,051
	Low affective	4,61	,89	
	High affective	4,96	,88	
	Self-destructive	4,32	1,08	
RASP-competence	Self-fulfilling	5,13	,66	14,489
	Low affective	4,71	,59	
	High affective	5,10	,62	
	Self-destructive	4,46	,84	
RASP-adaptability	Self-fulfilling	4,54	,64	10,878
	Low affective	4,29	,60	
	High affective	4,45	,63	
	Self-destructive	3,94	,75	
RASP-control	Self-fulfilling	4,71	,66	Ns
	Low affective	4,51	,87	
	High affective	4,64	,83	
	Self-destructive	4,39	,71	
RASP-engagement	Self-fulfilling	5,00	,63	6,583
	Low affective	4,73	,64	
	High affective	5,00	,53	
	Self-destructive	4,60	,69	

Table 4 – Means differences in psychological well-being for affective profiles

Dimensions of PWB	Profiles	M	SD	$F_{(3, 261)}$
Autonomy	Self-fulfilling	12,73	2,00	3,432
	Low affective	12,08	1,87	
	High affective	12,42	1,98	
	Self-destructive	11,67	2,24	
Environmental mastery	Self-fulfilling	11,23	1,96	Ns
	Low affective	10,92	1,88	
	High affective	11,23	2,07	
	Self-destructive	11,12	2,03	
Personal growth	Self-fulfilling	12,65	1,76	Ns
	Low affective	12,32	1,55	
	High affective	12,29	2,71	
	Self-destructive	12,07	2,17	
Relations with others	Self-fulfilling	9,48	2,08	Ns
	Low affective	9,93	2,31	
	High affective	9,92	2,42	
	Self-destructive	10,22	2,15	
Purpose in life	Self-fulfilling	11,72	2,50	3,671
	Low affective	10,48	2,42	
	High affective	11,42	2,59	
	Self-destructive	10,67	2,65	
Self-acceptance	Self-fulfilling	12,36	1,72	6,094
	Low affective	12,04	1,74	
	High affective	12,15	1,99	
	Self-destructive	11,04	2,36	

CONCLUSION

According to initial predictions ($H_1 - H_2$), the findings of the current study reveal that (H_1) self-fulfilling adolescents score higher on resilience, and specifically, sense of humor, competence, adaptability, engagement than the others, confirming our initial hypotheses and the empirical evidences observed by Di Fabio and Bucci's research (2015). Additionally, high affective adolescents score higher on engagement and competence than the others. It means that the adolescents characterized by high PA and low NA tend to bounce back adversities using humor, dealing with the consequences of their actions and changing their behavior in order to match them with the stressful situation, figuring out things they don't understand, and being efficiently prone to know when they are good at something. As well as, the adolescents characterized by high PA and high NA tend to overcome the difficulties adopting efficiently their own competence and engaging themselves in solution of daily problems. Furthermore (H_2), self-fulfilling adolescents report higher scores on psychological well-being and, in detail, autonomy, purpose in life, and self-acceptance than the others. So, it means that these adolescents are highly self-determined and independent in their life choices, have goals, intentions, and a sense of direction, and hold a positive opinion about themselves compared to the others.

These findings are in line with the evidences a) provided by Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) and Ong et al. (2006) in relation to the association between positive affect and resilience, in the sense that positive affect is positively related to high resilience; b) proposed by Norlander et al. (2005), Archer et al. (2007), Garcia & Siddiqui (2009a), according to which the psychological well-being is higher among self-fulfilling adolescents than all other profiles.

Differences for sex confirm the evidences observed by Schütz and her colleagues (2013) and Schütz, Garcia and Archer (2014), according to which the female individuals express a higher level of negative affect than the male ones; so, our results indicate that self-destructive (low PA/high NA) and high affective profile (high PA/high NA) are greatly present in girls rather than in boys.

Future research projects will be addressed toward the application of the same type of analysis in university students or adults, also deepening the relationship between affective profiles and other protective factors of human positive development in life span (for example, hope trait, self-efficacy, locus of control, and optimism).

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