THE LINKS BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM, NARCISSISM, AND FERTILITY ACROSS 65 COUNTRIES

Svetlana Pavlović, Janko Međedović
Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia

Exploring the associations between personality traits and fertility can help in understanding natural selection, and thus, evolution of personality in contemporary humans; however, the research on this topic are scarce. We explored the relations between fertility (i.e., number of children) and two personality traits with partially shared content – self-esteem and narcissism. According to the previous research we hypothesized positive associations regarding the former trait; however, both positive and negative links can be assumed for the latter. We used a publicly available database (ICSMP COVID-19 project) to conduct analyses. The sample was consisted of 43029 participants from 65 countries (52.10% females; Mage=43.19 [SD=16.06]). We controlled participants' sex, age, social status, and the type of settlement (urban vs. rural) in the analyses; furthermore, we analyzed the interactions between personality traits and demographic variables in the prediction as well. Self-esteem was measured via singular item ("I have high self-esteem") while narcissism was assessed using six items scale of Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire.

We fitted a multilevel Poisson model with random slopes: the number of children was modelled as the criterion variable. The results showed that 42% of the criterion's variation was explained by the predictors. Older participants with lower socioeconomic status, and the ones who lived in rural settlements had higher fertility; self-esteem positively predicted the number of children, but narcissism was not a significant predictor. Several interactions were found: positive link between self-esteem and fertility was higher in males and in urban environments; on the contrary, narcissism showed negative association with fertility in rural settlements. The data obtained for self-esteem are congruent with the existing results of positive directional selection on Extraversion trait, especially in males. Findings show that narcissism may not be under selection; furthermore, it may be evolutionary maladaptive in ecologies with lower population size. Limitations of the research, including mean age of participants, operationalizations of personality traits, and nonrepresentative samples are discussed as well. Present findings show the fruitfulness of measuring natural selection in contemporary humans and contribute to the field of behavioral ecology of human personality.

Ključne riječi / keywords: self-esteem; narcissism; number of children; natural selection; personality evolution

janko.medjedovic@fmk.edu.rs