

A New Measure of Self-Reported Tidiness: Does Tidiness Make You Happier?

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ABSTRACT

We were interested in the relationship between self-reported tidiness, life satisfaction, subjective happiness, impulsivity, Big 5 personality traits, and creativity. After developing a new measure of tidiness, we surveyed 240 adults and found correlations between tidiness and life satisfaction, and tidiness and subjective happiness, but not with creativity. Another study found correlations between impulsivity and conscientiousness.

INTRODUCTION

- While there are a number of popular press books and articles touting the benefits of getting organized or staying disorganized, there is very little actual research on the bases or benefits of normal variations in individual preferences for a tidy or messy living space.

- We were interested in the relationships between a person's level of tidiness and their satisfaction with life, happiness, and creativity.

- In order to do this, we first developed our own measure of an individual's preference for a tidy or messy environment.

TIDINESS SURVEY

- We defined tidiness as a reasonably concerted effort to keep an individual's environment neat and orderly.

- To measure this, we developed the Tidiness Scale originally consisting of 32 items in which participants rated their personal levels of tidiness on a number of items including

- their general rating of their own tidiness,
- their endorsement of specific behaviors and
- how frequently they engage in these behaviors

- 7of the questions asked the participant to rate their tidiness level with 1 being "a complete mess" and 7 being "very tidy"

- Examples: How tidy are you?, How messy is your desk ?

- 13of the questions addressed how much the participant agreed with the statements presented with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree".

- Examples: I enjoy cleaning., It bothers me when people come and move my things.

- The remaining twelve questions addressed the frequency that participants performed certain actions with 1 being "never" and 7 being "always".

- Examples: How often you make your bed per week? How often do you dust?

RESEARCH QUESTION

Does how tidy or messy you are affect your life in other areas such as how impulsive or happy you are?

TIDINESS SURVEY

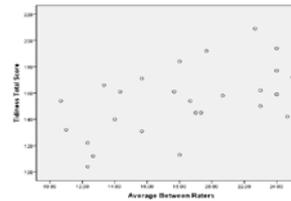
Reliability and Validity of Survey

- We collected an initial sample of 228 adults using an on-line survey. Our measure had a high degree of internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha = 0.92.

- We then administered our survey to 127 College of Idaho students on two occasions to determine our test-retest reliability of .83.

- We gave our tidiness survey to a sample of 26 college students residing in the College of Idaho dormitories or in private domiciles. We then took photographs of the participant's living spaces,

with special attention to 6 main areas; the floor, shelves, bedding, closets, desks, and background space. We then rated the photographs using a 5-point scale and compared them to the participant's scores of their individual tidiness. We found a correlation of .53 between our survey and the tidiness of an individual's living space indicating acceptable predictive validity.



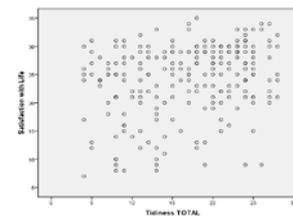
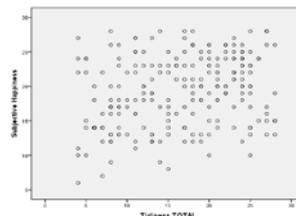
STUDY ONE

Aim: To test for possible relationships between tidiness and happiness, life satisfaction and creativity.

Participants: 240 people, aged 18-67.

Materials: Tidiness Survey, Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Subjective Happiness questionnaire, the Creative Behavior Inventory, Gough Creative Personality Scale.

Results: Both subjective happiness and life satisfaction were positively correlated with tidiness, $r = .26$ and $r = .28$, $p < .05$ with tidier individuals reporting greater happiness and life satisfaction. We found no correlation between tidiness and our creativity measures.



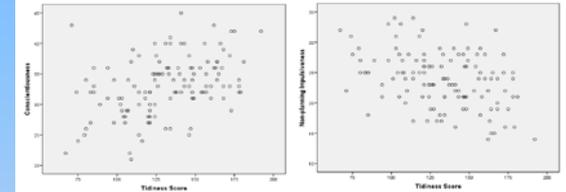
STUDY TWO

Aim: To test for possible relationships between Tidiness Big 5 personality traits, Impulsiveness (BIS)

Participants: 124 College of Idaho students

Materials: Tidiness Survey, Barratt Impulsiveness Scale, Big Five Inventory (Berkeley Personality Lab)

Results: Tidiness was positively correlated Conscientiousness, $r = .42$, and negatively correlated with Impulsiveness, $r = -.24$, especially with Non-planning Impulsiveness, $r = -.37$, all $ps < .05$.



DISCUSSION

- We posit that life satisfaction is correlated with tidiness because most of our sample is female (159) and from the feedback, females equate a tidy living space with success and wellness of family, both of which is presumed to make females happy and satisfied with life.

- We found no evidence to support the idea that messy people are more creative, however, we used very rough indices.

- We did find a correlation between conscientiousness and tidiness. This is consistent with the existing conscientiousness literature which often includes factors of orderliness and organization.

- Our measure of tidiness was also negatively correlated with impulsiveness especially non-planning impulsiveness.

