



Emotional Stability and Optimism as Core Protective Factors of Subjective Well-Being in Youth Facing Wartime Uncertainty

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Abstract: *Introduction:* This study examined the relationships among the Big Five personality traits, dispositional optimism, Emotional Stability, and subjective well-being in Ukrainian youth experiencing prolonged wartime uncertainty. *Methods:* A convenience sample of young adults ($N = 161$; 84% women; $M_{age} = 22.5$, $SD = 4.2$) completed the TIPI-UKR, the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R), and the Subjective Well-Being Scale. We used path analysis to examine direct and indirect associations. *Results:* Subjective well-being was significantly associated with dispositional optimism, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness, whereas Agreeableness showed no statistically significant association. The path model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data. Conscientiousness was indirectly associated with subjective well-being only through dispositional optimism, whereas Openness to Experience was indirectly associated with subjective well-being through both dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability. *Conclusions:* The findings are consistent with the proposed explanatory model and indicate statistical patterns according to which dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability may be regarded as complementary cognitive-motivational and affective resources that underlie the indirect associations between personality traits and subjective well-being. The findings also suggest that the adaptive potential of personality traits is context-dependent under conditions of prolonged wartime uncertainty.

Keywords: subjective well-being, optimism, Emotional Stability, Big Five, youth, war, resilience, prolonged uncertainty

Introduction

The conditions of prolonged military uncertainty impose a substantial psychological burden, which is experienced with severity by young people – a population navigating intensive stages of personal, professional, and social development. The chronic threat to safety, disruption of life plans, and the continuous necessity to adapt to volatile circumstances can severely undermine subjective well-being, which is conceptualized as a critical indicator of psychological adaptation and mental health. In contemporary psychology, subjective well-being is defined as a multidimensional construct encompassing a cognitive evaluation of one's life alongside an affective balance of positive and negative emotional experiences (Steel et al., 2008).

Prior empirical evidence indicates that key predictors of subjective well-being include both relatively stable personality characteristics – specifically the Big Five traits – and psychological resources linked to an individual's capacity

to maintain adaptation under stress. Among these resources, dispositional optimism, defined as a generalized expectation of positive future outcomes, warrants closer examination (Carver & Scheier, 2014).

Crucially, most prior investigations into the personality predictors of well-being have been conducted under conditions of relative social stability. Despite cumulative data regarding the discrete roles of specific personality traits and dispositional optimism, integrated models that simultaneously account for the cognitive-motivational and affective adaptive resources of youth facing prolonged military uncertainty remain systematically under-researched.

The present study examines the role of the Big Five personality traits in the subjective well-being of young people under conditions of prolonged military uncertainty and tests a model in which dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability are positioned as complementary cognitive-motivational and affective resources underlying the indirect associations between personality traits and subjective well-being.

Theoretical Rationale and Hypotheses

Personality Traits and Subjective Well-Being

The Big Five model stands as one of the most empirically validated frameworks for describing individual differences in personality. Numerous meta-analyses consistently demonstrate enduring associations between basic personality traits and subjective well-being (Anglim et al., 2020; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Steel et al., 2008). Emotional stability and Extraversion routinely emerge as the most robust predictors of well-being, whereas Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience exhibit moderate, yet predominantly positive, associations across various indicators of well-being (Anglim et al., 2020; Busseri & Erb, 2024).

Concurrently, contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes personality traits not as direct distal causes of well-being, but rather as broad dispositional characteristics whose influence is channeled through cognitive, motivational, and emotional mechanisms of adaptation (Busseri & Erb, 2024; Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). From this perspective, personality traits govern not only an individual's characteristic behavioral patterns but also their specific modes of event appraisal, emotional reactivity, and coping strategies when encountering life difficulties.

Proximal Mechanisms of Adaptation and the Role of Dispositional Optimism

Among the psychological resources through which personality dispositions may link to well-being, dispositional optimism warrants specific attention. Within the conceptual framework of Carver and Scheier (2014), it is defined as a generalized expectation of positive outcomes in the future.

Importantly, dispositional optimism must be distinguished from the broader construct of resilience. While optimism reflects a cognitive system of positive future expectations, resilience is typically operationalized as a dynamic process or the outcome of successful adaptation to adverse circumstances, encompassing a diverse array of personality and socio-psychological resources. Thus, dispositional optimism operates as a more circumscribed cognitive-motivational construct; it can be considered a resource that contributes to resilience but does not exhaust its scope.

Dispositional optimism is linked to the deployment of more adaptive coping strategies, persistence in goal attainment, and the constructive reframing of difficulties (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Carver & Scheier, 2014). Meta-analytic evidence confirms that optimism is positively associated with psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and mental health (Alarcon et al., 2013). Consequently, it can be viewed as a vital cognitive-motivational resource that supports adaptation and well-being under conditions of stress and uncertainty.

Temperamental and Instrumental Approaches to Explaining Well-Being

To elucidate the associations between personality and subjective well-being, psychological literature traditionally relies on two complementary frameworks: the temperamental and the instrumental approaches (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Diener & Lucas, 2008; Steel et al., 2008).

According to the temperamental approach, individual differences in the baseline propensity to experience positive and negative emotions establish a relatively stable foundation for well-being. Central to this paradigm is Emotional Stability, which is linked to lower levels of negative affect, attenuated emotional reactivity, and higher indices of psychological well-being (Steel et al., 2008).

Conversely, the instrumental approach emphasizes the role of cognitive and motivational mechanisms of adaptation. Within this framework, personality traits influence well-being via explicit cognitive appraisals of life events, future expectations, and the selection of coping strategies (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Dispositional optimism serves as one of the definitive constructs anchoring this instrumental approach.

Emotional Stability and Dispositional Optimism as Complementary Adaptive Resources

Within the framework of the proposed model, Emotional Stability and dispositional optimism are conceptualized as two complementary psychological resources for adaptation. Critically, Emotional Stability must not be conflated with emotion regulation. While Emotional Stability represents a relatively enduring personality characteristic that reflects a baseline propensity for lower emotional reactivity and reduced negative affect, emotion regulation encompasses the explicit processes and behavioral strategies used to manage emotional experiences. Thus, Emotional Stability characterizes an individual's typical, structural patterns of emotional reactivity, whereas emotion regulation describes the proximal mechanisms used to alter the trajectory and expression of emotions. In the proposed model, its potential mediating role does not imply that Emotional Stability is a consequence of other personality traits or that it loses its status as a relatively stable disposition. Rather, mediation is conceptualized as a statistical function of the variable within the structural relationships between personality traits and subjective well-being. Thus, Emotional Stability simultaneously retains its status as a core personality characteristic and serves as an intervening variable, representing the affective pathway and linking specific personality traits to subjective well-being. In the context of the present study, Emotional Stability is operationalized as an affective resource for adaptation, reflecting an individual's capacity to maintain relative emotional equilibrium under conditions of prolonged stress and uncertainty.

While dispositional optimism represents the cognitive-motivational dimension of adaptation via positive expectations regarding the future, Emotional Stability characterizes its affective component, which is tied to the capacity to preserve emotional balance under duress. Consequently, these constructs capture distinct, yet intrinsically interconnected, mechanisms of psychological adaptation.

Such an integrative perspective takes on heightened significance under conditions of prolonged military uncertainty. In contrast to the majority of prior investigations conducted during periods of relative social stability, war induces a context of chronic stress and persistent threat. Under these taxing circumstances, the simultaneous capacity to maintain positive future expectations and emotional equilibrium may become paramount for safeguarding subjective well-being.

Despite a substantial body of literature examining the personality predictors of well-being, considerably less attention has been dedicated to integrated models that concurrently incorporate cognitive-motivational and affective adaptive resources during protracted societal crises. Empirical data remain particularly scarce regarding young populations navigating sustained military uncertainty. Against this background, the proposed model offers a theoretically meaningful integration of cognitive-motivational and affective adaptive resources.

Research Hypotheses

Grounded in the temperamental and instrumental frameworks of subjective well-being, and premised on the critical function of internal psychological resources under conditions of prolonged military uncertainty, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Higher indices of dispositional optimism, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience, and Agreeableness will be associated with a higher level of subjective well-being among young people navigating prolonged military uncertainty.

This hypothesis is supported by cumulative empirical evidence demonstrating stable positive associations between the Big Five personality traits, dispositional optimism, and various dimensions of well-being (Steel et al., 2008; Soto, 2015; Anglim et al., 2020; Busseri & Erb, 2024). Specifically, dispositional optimism, operating as a cognitive-motivational resource for adaptation, is linked to positive future expectations and enhanced functional well-being (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Alarcon et al., 2013; Carver & Scheier, 2014). Conversely, Emotional Stability, operating as an affective resource, facilitates the preservation of emotional

equilibrium and attenuates negative affect under chronic stress (Diener & Lucas, 2008; Steel et al., 2008).

Prior investigations further suggest that the influence of fundamental personality traits on well-being is routinely channeled through specific cognitive and emotional mechanisms of adaptation. This provides a theoretical foundation to infer that dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability may serve an intervening, mediating function linking baseline personality traits to subjective well-being outcomes.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability will statistically account for the indirect associations between specific Big Five personality traits (Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience) and subjective well-being.

Methods

Participants

The sample consisted of 161 individuals aged 18 to 36 years, university students from Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Zhytomyr, Ukraine. The mean age of participants was 22.5 years ($Mdn = 21$, $SD = 4.2$), and 19% of participants were older than 25 years. The sample was predominantly female: 83.9% of participants identified as women and 16.1% identified as men.

Participants were recruited using a nonprobability convenience sampling strategy through university-related communication channels. Because the invitation was distributed through open university-related communication channels, the exact participation rate could not be calculated. Therefore, the sample should not be interpreted as randomly selected or fully representative of the broader population of Ukrainian youth. The predominance of female participants and the concentration of the sample in several Ukrainian cities should be considered when interpreting the generalizability of the findings.

Procedure

Data were collected in 2024–2025 during the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and under martial law. During the study period, the participants engaged in blended learning, combining online and offline educational formats depending on the country's current security situation. Participants were invited through university-related communication channels and completed the questionnaires online using a self-report survey format. The online format was selected because data were collected under martial law, when

access to participants and educational formats depended on the current security situation.

The study protocol and materials were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the H. S. Kostyuk Institute of Psychology of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine (Extract from minutes no. 2/7, 18 December 2023). Participants were provided with written information outlining the study aims, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any stage without negative consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. After data processing, participants were offered personalized feedback on their results. Additional clarification or psychological support was made available upon request.

Measures

Subjective Well-Being

The Six-Cluster version of the Subjective Well-Being Scale (Perrudet-Badoux et al., 1988) served as the primary assessment tool. This screening psychodiagnostic method includes 17 items assessing positive and negative emotional states as well as satisfaction with mood, health, social environment, and daily activities. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale and included both direct and reverse-scored items.

Lower scores indicate higher subjective well-being, characterized by the predominance of positive emotions, good mood, and satisfaction with different life domains. Conversely, higher scores reflect decreased subjective well-being, including negative emotional states, mood deterioration, and dissatisfaction. Although the instrument allows the assessment of several distinct clusters of subjective well-being, only the composite score reflecting a general decline in well-being was used in the present study. In the present sample, the general scale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$). Because higher raw scores mathematically indicate greater distress and dissatisfaction, this primary outcome variable is hereafter explicitly operationalized and referred to as decreased subjective well-being (DSW).

The instrument has been repeatedly applied in Ukrainian-language psychological studies of subjective well-being, particularly in research involving students and young adults. It has been used to examine emotional discomfort in relation to personality Openness profiles, associations between subjective well-being and personal maturity in student samples, and changes in subjective well-being during the period of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine (Himayeva & Malofeikina, 2019; Levenets & Kryazh, 2023; Zavhorodnia et al., 2025). This prior use provides additional support for its contextual relevance in the present study.

Big Five Personality Traits

The Big Five personality traits were assessed using the TIPI-UKR (Klimanska & Haletska, 2019), a validated Ukrainian adaptation of the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), originally developed by Gosling et al. (2003). The Ukrainian version has been validated, with evidence reported for translation adequacy, test-retest reliability, internal consistency, and construct validity. The measure assesses five broad personality traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale and included both direct and reverse-scored items.

The TIPI-UKR was selected because it provides an economical assessment of broad personality dimensions in Ukrainian-speaking samples and reduces participant burden. This consideration was particularly relevant in the present wartime context, where longer inventories could increase fatigue and reduce participation. At the same time, the instrument's brevity inevitably limits construct coverage, as reflected in the relatively low internal consistency coefficients observed for certain dimensions in our sample. Therefore, findings involving Big Five traits should be interpreted as reflecting broad personality tendencies rather than fine-grained trait facets. In the present sample, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were $\alpha = .50$ for Extraversion, $\alpha = .41$ for Agreeableness, $\alpha = .48$ for Conscientiousness, $\alpha = .55$ for Emotional Stability, and $\alpha = .71$ for Openness. Notably, these values closely align with the internal consistency estimates reported in the development of the original instrument by (Gosling et al. 2003), where Cronbach's alphas were similarly modest (ranging from .40 for Agreeableness to .73 for Emotional Stability). Such a decrease in internal consistency is a well-documented artifact of two-item personality measures, as Cronbach's alpha is mathematically dependent on scale length and does not indicate an insufficient quality of the Ukrainian adaptation (Klimanska & Haletska, 2019; Rammstedt & John, 2007). Following the rationale of (Gosling et al. 2003), the optimization of ultra-short scales prioritizes convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity over high internal consistency. These values are consistent with the use of the TIPI-UKR as a brief screening measure of broad personality tendencies under time-limited and emotionally demanding wartime survey conditions. Furthermore, using this streamlined tool substantially reduces participant boredom and frustration caused by repetitive items in longer inventories, thereby preserving data integrity and respondent engagement under chronic stress.

Dispositional Optimism

Dispositional optimism was assessed using the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R; Scheier et al., 1994). The instrument measures generalized positive expectations about

future outcomes and is commonly used in studies of well-being, coping, resilience, and psychological adaptation. The present study used the Ukrainian adaptation of the LOT-R, which has shown satisfactory psychometric properties, including reliability and construct validity, in previous research (Lukova, 2023). The 10-item scale includes positively worded items assessing optimism and negatively worded items assessing pessimism, which were reverse-scored. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher total scores indicating higher dispositional optimism. Internal consistency in the present sample was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using jamovi version 2.3. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all study variables, including means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, skewness, and kurtosis. These analyses were used to examine variable distributions and evaluate the suitability of the data for parametric analyses. Pearson correlation coefficients were then computed to assess bivariate associations among the Big Five personality traits, dispositional optimism, and decreased subjective well-being.

To examine the hypothesized indirect pathways, we conducted structural equation modeling using observed variables. The analytical strategy followed the logic of the study hypotheses: preliminary correlations were used to identify the pattern of associations among the study variables, and an integrated path model was estimated to evaluate simultaneous indirect pathways through dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability.

The structural equation model was estimated using maximum likelihood estimation. The final model included Conscientiousness and Openness as exogenous predictors, dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability as intervening variables, and decreased subjective well-being as the outcome variable. Specifically, dispositional optimism was regressed on Conscientiousness and Openness, Emotional Stability was regressed on Openness, and decreased subjective well-being was regressed on dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability. The covariance between Conscientiousness and Openness was freely estimated.

The sample size of $N = 161$ was considered adequate for the present relatively simple observed-variable path model, which included five observed variables and 16 free parameters, corresponding to approximately 10 observations per estimated parameter. The model did not involve a complex latent-variable structure, converged successfully, and showed no improper solutions. Nevertheless, because sample size requirements in SEM depend on model complexity,

effect sizes, and estimation goals, the sample should still be regarded as modest. As no formal power analysis or Monte Carlo simulation was conducted, future research should aim to replicate these findings using larger samples.

Model fit was evaluated using the chi-square test (χ^2), the χ^2/df ratio, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) with its 95% confidence interval. Because the model had a small number of degrees of freedom, fit indices were interpreted jointly rather than relying on a single criterion.

Indirect effects in the structural model were estimated as defined parameters and evaluated using bootstrap standard errors and percentile-based 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Three specific indirect pathways were tested: Conscientiousness $\rightarrow$ dispositional optimism $\rightarrow$ decreased subjective well-being, Openness $\rightarrow$ dispositional optimism $\rightarrow$ decreased subjective well-being, and Openness $\rightarrow$ Emotional Stability $\rightarrow$ decreased subjective well-being. Indirect effects were considered statistically supported when their 95% confidence intervals did not include zero. Given the cross-sectional design of the study, the mediation and path models were interpreted as patterns of associations consistent with the proposed theoretical model rather than as evidence of causal mechanisms.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the main study variables, including the primary outcome measure, decreased subjective well-being (DSW). Skewness and kurtosis values were all within the range of -0.80 to 0.80 , indicating no substantial deviations from normality and supporting the use of parametric analyses.

Hypothesis 1: Associations of Dispositional Optimism and Big Five Personality Traits with Decreased Subjective Well-Being

Hypothesis 1 proposed that dispositional optimism and Big Five personality traits (Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness) would be negatively associated with decreased subjective well-being, such that higher levels of these characteristics would correspond to lower levels of decreased subjective well-being. This hypothesis was generally supported.

As shown in Table 2, decreased subjective well-being was strongly and negatively associated with dispositional optimism, $r = -.520$, $p < .001$. Significant negative associations were also observed with Emotional Stability, $r = -.479$, $p < .001$, Openness, $r = -.280$, $p < .001$, Extraversion, $r = -.273$, $p < .001$, and Conscientiousness, $r = -.228$, $p < .01$. Among the Big Five traits, Emotional Stability showed the strongest association with decreased subjective well-being.

In contrast, Agreeableness was not significantly associated with decreased subjective well-being, $r = .118$, $p > .05$. Likewise, Agreeableness was unrelated to dispositional optimism, $r = -.006$, $p > .05$. In contrast, dispositional optimism was positively associated with Extraversion, $r = .257$, $p < .001$, Conscientiousness, $r = .250$, $p < .01$, Emotional Stability, $r = .249$, $p < .01$, and Openness, $r = .444$, $p < .001$. The strongest association with dispositional optimism was observed for Openness.

Thus, the hypothesized pattern of negative associations with decreased subjective well-being was confirmed for dispositional optimism, Emotional Stability, Openness, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness. In contrast, the expected association for Agreeableness was not supported. These findings suggest that Agreeableness may be less relevant to the experience of decreased subjective well-being than other personality characteristics examined in the present study.

Hypothesis 2: Dispositional Optimism and Emotional Stability as Complementary Mediating Pathways

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the associations between specific Big Five personality traits and subjective well-being would be statistically mediated by dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability, operating as complementary cognitive-motivational and affective adaptive resources. To test this hypothesis, an observed-variable path model was estimated. While the initial theoretical hypothesis encom-

passed four personality domains, the structural model focused on Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience as exogenous predictors, based on their theoretical relevance and strong preliminary bivariate associations. In this integrated structure, dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability were specified as parallel intervening variables (mediators), and decreased subjective well-being (DSW) was specified as the primary outcome criterion.

The model was estimated using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation with bootstrap standard errors and percentile-based 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Within this structural framework, dispositional optimism was conceptualized as a proximal cognitive-motivational resource, whereas Emotional Stability was operationalized as a personality-level affective resource rather than an active process of emotion regulation. In total, the path model included 161 valid observations and 16 free parameters.

The model showed an overall acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(4, N = 161) = 6.22$, $p = .184$, $\chi^2/df = 1.56$, CFI = .984, TLI = .964, SRMR = .042, RMSEA = .059, 95% CI [.000, .143], $p_{close} = .356$. The nonsignificant χ^2 value, high comparative fit indices, and SRMR below the conventional threshold suggest that the proposed model was broadly consistent with the observed covariance matrix. However, given the small number of degrees of freedom and the relatively wide RMSEA confidence interval, model fit should be interpreted with caution. The hypothesized model also showed a substantial improvement over the baseline independence model, $\chi^2(9, N = 161) = 146.44$, $p < .001$. Model fit indices are presented in Table 3

Standardized path estimates indicated that Openness was positively associated with both dispositional optimism, $\beta = .424$, estimate = 0.331, $SE = 0.049$, 95% CI [0.235, 0.431], $p < .001$, and Emotional Stability, $\beta = .283$, estimate = 0.309, $SE = 0.083$, 95% CI [0.138, 0.466], $p < .001$.

In terms of direct effects on the outcome, Emotional Stability was negatively associated with decreased subjective well-being, $\beta = -.380$, estimate = -0.254, $SE = 0.044$, 95% CI [-0.337, -0.165], $p < .001$. Similarly, dispositional

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of the variables ($N = 161$)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
DSW	49.75	12.64	0.23	0.24
DO	47.15	12.66	-0.09	0.32
E	66.99	16.56	-0.33	-0.37
A	63.35	15.47	-0.30	-0.18
C	73.78	14.91	-0.55	-0.04
ES	55.81	18.60	0.04	-0.50
O	74.58	16.90	-0.80	0.80

Note. DSW = decreased subjective well-being; DO = dispositional optimism; E = Extraversion; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness; ES = Emotional Stability; O = Openness.

Table 2. Correlations between decreased subjective well-being, dispositional optimism, and the Big Five Personality Traits

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. DSW	–						
2. DO	–.520***	–					
3. E	–.273***	.257***	–				
4. A	.118	–.006	.005	–			
5. C	–.228**	.250**	.113	.034	–		
6. ES	–.479***	.249**	–.007	–.054	.061	–	
7. O	–.280***	.444***	.307***	.059	.094	.283***	–

Note. DSW = decreased subjective well-being; DO = dispositional optimism; E = Extraversion; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness; ES = Emotional Stability; O = Openness. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Fit Indices for the structural model

Fit index	Value
χ^2	6.22
df	4
p	.184
χ^2/df	1.56
CFI	.984
TLI	.964
SRMR	.042
RMSEA	.059
RMSEA 95% CI	[.000, .143]
RMSEA p_{close}	.356
Baseline model χ^2	146.44
Baseline model df	9
Baseline model p	< .001

Note. $N = 161$. The model was estimated using maximum likelihood estimation with bootstrap standard errors and percentile-based 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples.

optimism exerted a strong negative effect on decreased subjective well-being, $\beta = -.436$, estimate = -0.407 , $SE = 0.062$, 95% CI $[-0.529, -0.287]$, $p < .001$.

Regarding indirect effects, the indirect pathway from Openness to decreased subjective well-being through dispositional optimism was statistically significant, estimate = -0.135 , $SE = 0.028$, 95% CI $[-0.191, -0.082]$, $\beta = -.185$, $p < .001$. Concurrently, the parallel indirect pathway from Openness through Emotional Stability was also significant, estimate = -0.078 , $SE = 0.028$, 95% CI $[-0.139, -0.029]$, $\beta = -.108$, $p = .005$. Together, these findings indicate that Openness was linked to lower DSW through two complementary, parallel pathways. Finally, Conscientiousness demonstrated a significant indirect association with decreased subjective well-being exclusively through the cognitive-motivational route of dispositional optimism, estimate = -0.075 , $SE = 0.032$, 95% CI $[-0.143, -0.017]$, $\beta = -.091$, $p = .019$. Direct and indirect effects from the structural model are presented in Table 4.

In summary, the path-analytic results verified the proposed structural framework, highlighting that core personal

dispositions are linked to subjective well-being through specific, parallel mediating mechanisms. While Conscientiousness operates solely via cognitive-motivational pathways, Openness utilizes both affective and cognitive-motivational adaptive resources. Given the cross-sectional design, these structural patterns reflect robust associations consistent with the proposed explanatory model rather than definitive causal mediation.

Discussion

Personality Traits, Dispositional Optimism, and Subjective Well-Being

The empirical findings are broadly consistent with the first hypothesis, demonstrating that dispositional optimism and specific Big Five personality traits are significantly associated with the subjective well-being of young people navigating prolonged military uncertainty. Beyond mere statistical significance, the magnitude of these observed effects warrants distinct attention. The most robust associations with well-being were exhibited by dispositional optimism ($r = -.520$, $p < .001$) and Emotional Stability ($r = -.479$, $p < .001$), which demonstrated substantial effect sizes reflecting a strong protective role against decreased subjective well-being. By contrast, Extraversion $r = -.273$, $p < .001$, Openness to Experience $r = -.280$, $p < .001$, and Conscientiousness ($r = -.228$, $p < .01$) demonstrated weaker associations. This substantive difference in effect sizes underscores that not all adaptive traits are equally salient under chronic stress. Conversely, Agreeableness failed to display a significant relationship with well-being outcomes ($r = .118$, $p > .05$).

These results align with a substantial body of literature positioning Emotional Stability as one of the most reliable personality-level predictors of well-being (Anglim et al., 2020; Steel et al., 2008), and dispositional optimism as a critical cognitive-motivational resource for adaptation and psychological resilience (Carver et al., 2010; Carver &

Table 4. Direct and indirect effects in the structural model

Path / Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI	β	z	p
C → DO	0.185	0.069	[0.049, 0.318]	.210	2.69	.007
O → DO	0.331	0.049	[0.235, 0.431]	.424	6.73	< .001
O → ES	0.309	0.083	[0.138, 0.466]	.283	3.74	< .001
DO → DSW	−0.407	0.062	[−0.529, −0.287]	−.436	−6.57	< .001
ES → DSW	−0.254	0.044	[−0.337, −0.165]	−.380	−5.75	< .001
C → DO → DSW	−0.075	0.032	[−0.143, −0.017]	−.091	−2.35	.019
O → DO → DSW	−0.135	0.028	[−0.191, −0.082]	−.185	−4.88	< .001
O → ES → DSW	−0.078	0.028	[−0.139, −0.029]	−.108	−2.82	.005

Note. *N* = 161. C = Conscientiousness; O = Openness to Experience; DO = dispositional optimism; ES = Emotional Stability; DSW = decreased subjective well-being. Confidence intervals are percentile-based 95% bootstrap confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Indirect effects are defined parameters estimated within the structural model.

Scheier, 2014). Optimism functions as a cognitive asset that sustains expectations of positive outcomes even when control over external circumstances is severely constrained, thereby facilitating the deployment of more active and adaptive coping strategies. These findings further corroborate contemporary data linking optimism to enhanced life satisfaction, attenuated psychological distress, and higher overall psychological resilience (Busseri & Erb, 2024).

High Emotional Stability is traditionally associated with a reduced propensity for negative affect, rumination, and catastrophizing, whereas optimism supports maintaining positive future expectations and selecting adaptive strategies to overcome difficulties. Individuals characterized by high Emotional Stability typically manage stressful events more effectively, experience feelings of helplessness less frequently, and demonstrate a greater capacity for emotional self-regulation (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Under conditions of military uncertainty, this trait may operate as an affective buffer, dampening the deleterious impact of chronic stressors. This interpretation is consistent with the evidence presented by Anglim et al. (2020), who identify Emotional Stability as one of the most stable predictors of both subjective and psychological well-being. Both constructs – optimism and Emotional Stability – may play an especially vital role in scenarios of prolonged stress, where conventional methods of exerting control over life circumstances are substantially restricted. These findings further corroborate contemporary data linking optimism to enhanced life satisfaction and higher overall psychological resilience.

Concurrently, the data suggest that the salience of specific personality traits may be context-dependent. Specifically, in conditions of enduring military threat, characteristics tied to the capacity to regulate negative experiences and maintain positive expectations regarding the future may take precedence for well-being over traits oriented primarily toward social interaction. Under stable conditions, Extraversion is conventionally viewed as one of the strongest predictors of well-being due to its intrinsic

links to positive emotionality, social activity, and broader avenues for eliciting social support (Soto, 2015). However, during prolonged military uncertainty, resources securing internal psychological resilience may become far more decisive than characteristics associated with external social activity. Within this context, the heightened association of well-being with Emotional Stability and optimism appears systematic, as these specific attributes govern the capacity to preserve emotional equilibrium and maintain a positive orientation toward the future amidst ongoing volatility.

The absence of a significant relationship between Agreeableness and subjective well-being warrants particular interest. Although Agreeableness typically correlates with adaptive interpersonal functioning and social support, its utility may be heavily moderated by specific social conditions. It is plausible that during wartime, resources linked to emotional self-regulation and a positive vision of the future are paramount for sustaining well-being, whereas the role of prosocial inclinations operates less directly. This explanation remains hypothetical and requires further empirical verification. Such contextual variability is consistent with the findings of Anglim et al. (2020), which demonstrated that the associations between individual Big Five traits and well-being can vary significantly depending on age, cultural environment, and life context.

Importantly, the lack of association for Agreeableness may stem from factors beyond the wartime context. Alternative explanations encompass the cultural specificity of the sample, the structural constraints of the ultrashort TIPI-UKR instrument, or the possibility that Agreeableness influences well-being predominantly through indirect mechanisms, such as interpersonal relationship quality and perceived social support. Furthermore, specific characteristics of the study sample, including its age composition and recruitment parameters, may have played a role. Future investigations utilizing more heterogeneous samples will be necessary to test the robustness of this observed pattern.

In sum, these findings reinforce prior research regarding the importance of internal personality resources for safe-

guarding well-being, while simultaneously highlighting the contextual variability of their adaptive value. Under conditions of prolonged military uncertainty, characteristics associated with Emotional Stability and a positive orientation toward the future gain heightened salience. The current results allow for the conceptualization of Emotional Stability and dispositional optimism as complementary adaptive resources: the former secures the regulation of negative experiences and the maintenance of emotional equilibrium, while the latter preserves positive expectations regarding the future and sustains motivational readiness to overcome adversity.

Indirect Associations Between Personality Traits and Well-Being: The Role of Cognitive and Affective Adaptive Resources

One of the most salient findings of the present study was the empirical support for the proposition that the relationship between specific personality traits and subjective well-being is channeled not only directly but also through specific cognitive and affective resources for adaptation. These data align with hierarchical, multidimensional frameworks of well-being, wherein broad, baseline personality traits influence adaptation via more specific psychological mechanisms (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; McCrae & Costa, 1991; Steel et al., 2008).

The current findings regarding the intervening role of dispositional optimism in linking several personality traits to subjective well-being corroborate the conceptualization of optimism as a vital cognitive-motivational resource for adaptation. Similar patterns have been observed in contemporary youth research. Specifically, Lu et al. (2024) demonstrated that optimism mediates the relationship between psychological resilience and perceived stress, while Luo et al. (2023) highlighted its protective role in the relationship between experienced social trauma and depressive symptoms. Taken together, this body of evidence reinforces the premise that optimism operates as a critical psychological mechanism of adaptation under chronic stress.

From an instrumental perspective, optimism does not merely reflect passive positive expectations about the future; it actively shapes the modes through which life events are appraised, guides the selection of coping strategies, and sustains motivational readiness to maintain goal-directed activity even under conditions of prolonged uncertainty (Carver & Scheier, 2014). The present results suggest that the beneficial contribution of specific personality traits to well-being may be partially realized through an individual's propensity to maintain belief in a favorable development of future outcomes. In a wartime context, such a

future-oriented focus may carry pronounced adaptive value, supporting motivation and psychological engagement despite ongoing volatility (Busseri & Erb, 2024).

Concurrently, the results highlight the salience of Emotional Stability as an affective adaptive resource. Unlike dispositional optimism, which is primarily tied to the cognitive evaluation of the future, Emotional Stability reflects a baseline structural tendency to preserve internal emotional equilibrium and a lower vulnerability to negative affect. From a temperamental perspective, these individual differences in experiencing and regulating emotions can largely govern an individual's capacity to safeguard well-being under chronic stress. This interpretation is consistent with the temperamental framework of well-being (Diener & Lucas, 2008), which posits that individuals characterized by lower levels of Neuroticism (higher Emotional Stability) exhibit more stable positive affect and a lower propensity to catastrophize.

The present findings indicate that the affective dimension of adaptation is no less critical than the cognitive component, particularly when individuals navigate enduring external threats and constrained environmental control. This functional division between dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability aligns with dual-component models of adaptation, which suggest that affective stability establishes the emotional foundation for responding to stressful events, whereas cognitive orientations dictate their subjective interpretation and the subsequent selection of behavioral strategies (Fredrickson, 2001; Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010).

At the same time, it is crucial to clarify the conceptual role of Emotional Stability within the proposed model. This interpretation does not imply that Emotional Stability ceases to be viewed as a relatively stable personality disposition or that it emerges as a consequence of other personality traits. Within the framework of the proposed model, its mediating role reflects primarily a statistical function within the structural relationships among the variables rather than a shift in its conceptual status. In other words, Emotional Stability retains its status as a core personality characteristic yet simultaneously serves as an intervening variable through which the associations between other personality traits and subjective well-being are statistically described. In this sense, Emotional Stability conceptually differs from both emotion regulation and psychological resilience. While emotion regulation encompasses the explicit processes and strategies deployed to manage emotional experiences, and resilience is typically conceptualized as a dynamic process of successful adaptation following adverse events, Emotional Stability reflects a baseline dispositional propensity toward lower emotional reactivity and greater affective balance. This dispositional characteristic can statistically explain a portion of the variance linking other personality traits to subjective well-being.

The findings regarding Openness to Experience warrant particular attention. Distinct from the other personality traits examined, Openness was associated with subjective well-being through two complementary, parallel pathways: a cognitive pathway, represented by dispositional optimism, and an affective pathway, represented by Emotional Stability. This pattern suggests a potentially specific role for Openness as a core resource for psychological flexibility in volatile environments. Individuals characterized by high Openness to Experience typically exhibit a greater readiness to re-evaluate established beliefs, accommodate novel experiences, and entertain alternative perspectives. Openness is also intrinsically linked to cognitive flexibility, reflexivity, and the capacity to envision alternative future scenarios – attributes conceptualized as vital resources for adapting to ambiguity (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Fredrickson, 2001). These specific qualities may facilitate both the maintenance of positive future expectations and more successful emotional adjustment to complex life circumstances. Consequently, this finding identifies a promising avenue for future investigations into the precise role of psychological flexibility as an adaptive asset under chronic uncertainty.

Furthermore, these results are highly consistent with the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), which posits that cognitive and emotional resources mutually reinforce one another, thereby sustaining adaptation and well-being during protracted stress. The current data can also be interpreted within the framework of the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which asserts that stable personality-level resources play a pivotal role in maintaining adaptation and well-being under chronic strain. Within this context, dispositional optimism and Emotional Stability operate as vital psychological assets that actively preserve subjective well-being amidst wartime uncertainty.

From a practical standpoint, the magnitude of these indirect associations underscores their substantive importance for psychological interventions. The finding that Openness and Conscientiousness are linked to well-being through specific cognitive and affective pathways (e.g., the indirect effect of Openness via optimism: $\beta = -.185$) suggests that the latter are not merely intermediate statistical variables, but critical, actionable targets for support. While core personality traits are relatively fixed, interventions aimed at bolstering dispositional optimism or enhancing emotion-regulation skills could yield meaningful improvements in the well-being of youth facing chronic wartime stress.

Importantly, the observed indirect effects must be interpreted with due caution. Given the cross-sectional design of this study, these pathways cannot be interpreted as evidence of causal mediation mechanisms. Rather, they reflect a structural pattern of associations that is theoretically con-

gruent with the proposed conceptual model, pointing to the potential role of cognitive and affective resources in linking underlying personality traits to the subjective well-being of young people facing military uncertainty.

Theoretical Implications

The empirical findings of the present study carry several noteworthy theoretical implications. First, they provide robust support for the integration of the temperamental and instrumental frameworks to elucidate the mechanisms underlying subjective well-being. While the temperamental approach accentuates the foundational role of affective dispositions – primarily Emotional Stability – the instrumental approach underscores the salience of specific adaptive resources, such as dispositional optimism. The current data indicate that these paradigms should not be viewed as competing explanations, but rather as capturing complementary mechanisms of adaptation through which core personality characteristics influence subjective well-being outcomes.

Second, these results corroborate contemporary perspectives regarding the contextual variability of the adaptive value of personality traits. Although the link between the Big Five domains and well-being stands as one of the most enduring conclusions in personality psychology, the specific configuration and relative salience of individual traits can fluctuate depending on environmental circumstances and macro-level life contexts. The present data suggest that under conditions of prolonged military uncertainty, resources securing Emotional Stability and a positive future orientation gain heightened critical value for safeguarding subjective well-being, whereas the adaptive utility of traits oriented primarily toward social and interpersonal interaction may become less pronounced.

In sum, the findings expand contemporary understanding of the proximal psychological pathways that sustain subjective well-being under chronic stress, highlighting the necessity of simultaneously incorporating both affective and cognitive-motivational resources within integrative models of adaptation.

Limitations and Future Directions

When interpreting the empirical findings of the present study, several limitations must be carefully considered. First, the investigation was conducted on a relatively modest sample of Ukrainian youth characterized by a predominantly female gender distribution. Participants were recruited utilizing a non-probability convenience sampling strategy via university communication channels, which inherently constrains the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of young adults. The adequacy of

the sample size was evaluated based on conventional rules of thumb regarding the number of observations per estimated model parameter. However, no formal power analysis or Monte Carlo simulation was conducted in the present study. Therefore, future research should not only replicate the obtained findings using larger, more representative, and gender-balanced samples, but also employ formal approaches to justify sample size adequacy, specifically power analysis or Monte Carlo simulations.

Second, all variables were assessed using self-report questionnaires and collected at a single point in time, which may increase the risk of common method variance and socially desirable responding. Although the use of validated psychometric instruments and the anonymous nature of participation may have partially mitigated this risk, it cannot be entirely eliminated. Furthermore, personality traits were assessed using the brief version of the Big Five Inventory (TIPI-UKR), which was justified by the need to minimize participant burden under wartime conditions. However, brief instruments inevitably provide less comprehensive coverage of personality constructs compared to full-length inventories. Given the relatively low internal consistency coefficients observed for certain TIPI-UKR dimensions, the present findings should be interpreted as reflecting broad Big Five personality domains rather than more fine-grained trait facets.

Third, the cross-sectional design of this study precludes any definitive inferences regarding causal relationships among the variables. Although the observed indirect pathways are congruent with the proposed conceptual framework, they cannot be interpreted as empirical verification of causal mediation mechanisms.

Future research should aim to verify the robustness of the present findings using longitudinal designs, as well as to incorporate demographic and contextual control variables into the structural models, specifically gender, age, region of residence, and indicators of individual wartime experience. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to account for other relevant factors, such as social support, exposure to traumatic events, forced displacement, subjective perception of threat, and access to psychological assistance.

Practical Implications

The empirical findings of the present study carry direct practical utility for psychological counseling, psychoeducational programs, and institutional psychological support frameworks designed for young people navigating prolonged military uncertainty. The identified patterns suggest that interventions aimed at preserving and enhancing subjective well-being may achieve greater efficacy by targeting proximal cognitive-motivational and affective adaptive resources.

Specifically, promising avenues for psychological intervention include the cultivation of realistic optimism, the maintenance of a positive future orientation, and the enhancement of cognitive reappraisal skills for interpreting adverse life events. Equally important is strengthening adaptive emotional functioning through the development of emotional awareness, effective emotion regulation, psychological flexibility, and coping skills for chronic stress. Ultimately, integrating these core components into comprehensive support initiatives can substantially facilitate the maintenance of subjective well-being and bolster the overall resilience of youth facing systemic ambiguity.

Conclusions

The empirical findings of this study underscore the critical significance of dispositional optimism as a cognitive-motivational resource and Emotional Stability as an affective resource, both intrinsically linked to the subjective well-being of Ukrainian youth navigating prolonged military uncertainty.

Theoretically, the results support an integrative paradigm that synthesizes the temperamental and instrumental frameworks of well-being. The data corroborate the proposition that core personality traits influence subjective well-being both directly and through specific cognitive-motivational and affective resources for adaptation. Concurrently, the findings highlight the contextual variability governing the adaptive salience of specific personality traits, as evidenced by the less pronounced role of Agreeableness under conditions of ongoing wartime volatility.

Practically, the utility of this work lies in its capacity to inform the design and implementation of psychological support initiatives tailored for young people. Such interventions should strategically focus on strengthening proximal cognitive-motivational and affective adaptive resources, specifically through the cultivation of realistic optimism, cognitive reappraisal strategies, psychological flexibility, and constructive emotion regulation.

Finally, future longitudinal investigations remain imperative to rigorously evaluate the temporal stability of the identified indirect pathways and to further clarify the complex mechanisms underlying psychological adaptation and the maintenance of subjective well-being under chronic military stress.

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Open Science

Open Data: The de-identified dataset and accompanying codebook supporting the conclusions of this study are openly available in the PsychArchives repository at <https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.22325> (Shepelova & Zavhorodnia, 2026a).

Open Materials: The psychometric instruments used in this study are available at <https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.22324> (Shepelova & Zavhorodnia, 2026b). Detailed descriptions of these measures are also provided within the Methods section.

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