

The Influence of Sense of Humor on Resilience and Psychological Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Cognitive Appraisal

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Abstract	Method	Analytic Strategy
Humour, and the discrete positive emotion of amusement have been shown to be positive influences on a range of organizational outcomes. While studies have shown that a sense of humour is important for leaders and employees alike, fewer studies have focused on the underlying mechanisms by which a sense of humour leads to these positive outcomes. The current study hypothesizes a positive relationship between organizational employees' resilience and psychological well-being. It is also hypothesized that cognitive appraisal mediates the sense of humour-resilience and psychological well-being link. A sense of humour is thus likely to encourage individuals to reappraise demanding or stressful situations, leading to enhanced resilience and psychological well-being. One hundred and eight (108) employees from various organizations in Malaysia provided responses to questionnaires assessing sense of humour, resilience, psychological well-being, and cognitive appraisal tendencies. The hypotheses were assessed via the PROCESS macro in SPSS, allowing for assessment of the main effects and hypothesized mediation effect. Results provided support for the hypotheses – sense of humour was significantly related to resilience and psychological well-being, and that cognitive appraisal mediated this link. The results are discussed in light of implications for humour theory and research in organizations, as well as how a sense of a humour may serve a buffering effect towards workplace stress.	A non-experimental correlational study was conducted amongst 108 employees from various organizations in Malaysia who were at least 23 years of age. Measures used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sense of Humor</i>: 24-items Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (Thorson & Powell, 1993). <i>Resilience</i>: 14-items Ego-Resiliency Scale (Block & Kremen, 1996). <i>Psychological Well-Being</i>: 7-items Measure of Psychological Well-Being (Choi, DiNitto, & Kim, 2014). <i>Cognitive Appraisal</i>: Cognitive Appraisal Scale (Skinner & Brewer, 2002) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-items Challenge Appraisal subscale 10-items Threat Appraisal subscale <i>Demographic questionnaire</i>: 6 items measuring age, gender, employment status, occupation, industry of related job, and the number of years worked in the respective company. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro to test the mediation hypotheses – that the relationship between SOH and resilience and PWB will be mediated by challenge appraisal. The PROCESS macro enables the analysis of the indirect effect of SOH (X) on resilience (Y_1) and on PWB (Y_2) through challenge appraisal (M). The macro assesses whether the effect of X and Y is significantly explained by another variable, M. The assessment was conducted twice, simultaneously, for the analyses of the mediating relationship on both outcome variables – resilience and PWB. In all of the PROCESS macro tests conducted, we used 1000 bootstrap samples and the confidence intervals (CIs) set at 95%.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	Results and Post-Hoc Analyses																																																																																					
<p>Sense of Humour, Resilience and Psychological Well-Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of Humour: the tendency to laugh and to joke during stressful situations (Martin et al., 2003). Research has suggested that the use of humour is associated with numerous beneficial individual-level outcomes, such as greater frequency of experience of positive emotions (Geisler & Weber, 2010), more positive self-conceptualizations (Martin et al., 1993; Tracy et al., 2006), as well as elevated psychological well-being (PWB; Kuiper, 2012). <p>Humour and Amusement as Buffers of Stress: The Broaden-and-Build Theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance to the broaden-and-build theory, Fredrickson (2004) proposes that humor might function as a mechanism that promotes positive coping through an important mechanism – cognitive appraisals. These cognitive appraisals, described as an individual's evaluation of construing an occurrence that influences his/her course of action is central towards understanding the SOH-resilience and PWB link (Skinner & Brewer, 2002; Martin et al. 1993). <p>Cognitive Appraisals as Mechanisms for Promoting Resiliency and Well-Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first manner of appraisal is challenge appraisal, in which the individual focuses on the positive aspects of the situation, and their competence in surmounting the challenge and meeting their goal. The second manner of appraisal is threat appraisal, in which the individual focuses on the negative aspects of the situation, along with their inability to cope with that stressful circumstance (Skinner & Brewer, 2002). Kuiper (1993) argues that a sense of humour enables a more favourable appraisal of stressful situations, adding that individuals high on SOH are more likely to see such situations as less threatening. Past research has focused extensively on the stress-buffering effects of SOH as a coping strategy (Abel, 2002; Kuiper et al., 1993). Further, there is evidence for the buffering effects of humor during adversity (Kuiper, 2012), and the links between SOH in influencing challenge appraisals of stressful situations (Geisler & Weber, 2010; Maiolino & Kuiper, 2016). Aim: To investigate cognitive appraisal as the mediator of the relationship between sense of humor and resilience and psychological well-being. 	<p><i>Indirect Effect(s) of MSHS Factors on Resilience and PWB via Challenge Appraisal</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Effect</th> <th>Boot SE</th> <th>LLCI</th> <th>ULCI</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5">Factor I: Humor creativity/Social uses (X_1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_1 - M$</td> <td>.01*</td> <td>.01</td> <td>-.00</td> <td>.03</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_1 - M - Y_1$</td> <td>.06</td> <td>.03</td> <td>.00</td> <td>.12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_1 - M - Y_2$</td> <td>.02</td> <td>.01</td> <td>.00</td> <td>.04</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5">Factor II: Coping humor (X_2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_2 - M$</td> <td>.09**</td> <td>.02</td> <td>.04</td> <td>.13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_2 - M - Y_1$</td> <td>.33*</td> <td>.11</td> <td>.14</td> <td>.58</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_2 - M - Y_2$</td> <td>.11</td> <td>.04</td> <td>.05</td> <td>.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5">Factor III: Appreciation of humorous people (X_3)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_3 - M$</td> <td>.02</td> <td>.01</td> <td>-.00</td> <td>.05</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_3 - M - Y_1$</td> <td>.10</td> <td>.06</td> <td>-.00</td> <td>.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_3 - M - Y_2$</td> <td>.03</td> <td>.02</td> <td>.00</td> <td>.08</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5">Factor IV: General humor attitudes (X_4)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_4 - M$</td> <td>.11**</td> <td>.03</td> <td>.04</td> <td>.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_4 - M - Y_1$</td> <td>.47</td> <td>.21</td> <td>.16</td> <td>.94</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$X_4 - M - Y_2$</td> <td>.14</td> <td>.06</td> <td>.04</td> <td>.30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Notes. M = Challenge Appraisal; Y_1 = Resilience; Y_2 = PWB</p>		Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI	Factor I: Humor creativity/Social uses (X_1)					$X_1 - M$.01*	.01	-.00	.03	$X_1 - M - Y_1$.06	.03	.00	.12	$X_1 - M - Y_2$.02	.01	.00	.04	Factor II: Coping humor (X_2)					$X_2 - M$.09**	.02	.04	.13	$X_2 - M - Y_1$.33*	.11	.14	.58	$X_2 - M - Y_2$.11	.04	.05	.21	Factor III: Appreciation of humorous people (X_3)					$X_3 - M$.02	.01	-.00	.05	$X_3 - M - Y_1$.10	.06	-.00	.25	$X_3 - M - Y_2$.03	.02	.00	.08	Factor IV: General humor attitudes (X_4)					$X_4 - M$.11**	.03	.04	.17	$X_4 - M - Y_1$.47	.21	.16	.94	$X_4 - M - Y_2$.14	.06	.04	.30
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Discussion	References
<p>Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, 3a, 3b, and 4 were supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant correlations between sense of humor and challenge appraisal, resilience, and psychological well-being. Results resembled past research that discovered that high sense of humor individuals adopt challenge appraisals when stressed, which builds resilience and enhances psychological well-being (Kuiper, 2012; Maiolino & Kuiper, 2016; Martin et al., 1993; Martin et al., 2003). In particular, the relationship between the coping humour factor and resilience is fully mediated by challenge appraisal. <p>Hypothesis 2b was not supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of humor was not significantly correlated with threat appraisal. Inconsistent with past research (Kuiper et al., 1993; Maiolino & Kuiper, 2016). <p>Alternative explanations: Individual differences in uses of humor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each individual engages in different humorous strategy (Kuiper, 2012), which results in one's self-perception as having a sense of humor regardless of the humor style (adaptive or maladaptive) one adopts. Findings make contributions to the understanding of the underlying mechanisms employees with high sense of humor practise. 	<p>Abel, M. H. (2002). Humor, stress, and coping strategies. <i>Humor – International Journal of Humor Research</i>, 15(4), 365-381.</p> <p>Block, J., & Kremen, A. M. (1996). IQ and ego-resiliency: conceptual and empirical connections and separateness. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 70(2), 349.</p> <p>Choi, N. G., DiNitto, D. M., & Kim, J. (2014). Discrepancy between chronological age and felt age: Age group difference in objective and subjective health as correlates. <i>Journal of Aging and Health</i>, 26(3), 458-473. doi: 10.1177/0898264314523449</p> <p>Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. <i>Philosophical Transactions – Royal Society of London</i>, 359, 1367-1378. doi: 10.1098/rstb.2004.1512</p> <p>Fredrickson, B. L., Tugade, M. M., Waugh, C. E., & Larkin, G. R. (2003). What good are positive emotions in crisis? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 84(2), 365.</p> <p>Geisler, F. C., & Weber, H. (2010). Harm that does not hurt: Humour in coping with self-threat. <i>Motivation and Emotion</i>, 34(4), 446-456. doi: 10.1007/s11031-010-9185-6</p> <p>Hayes, A. F. (2013). Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach. New York: Guilford.</p> <p>Kuiper, N. A. (2012). Humor and resiliency: Towards a process model of coping and growth. <i>Europe's Journal of Psychology</i>, 8(3), 475-491.</p> <p>Kuiper, N. A., Martin, R. A., & Olinger, L. J. (1993). Coping humour, stress, and cognitive appraisals. <i>Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue Canadienne des Sciences du Comportement</i>, 25(1), 81.</p> <p>Maiolino, N., & Kuiper, N. A. (2016). Examining the impact of a brief humor exercise on psychological well-being. <i>Translational Issues in Psychological Science</i>, 2(1).</p> <p>Martin, R. A., Kuiper, N. A., Olinger, L. J., & Dance, K. A. (1993). Humor, coping with stress, self-concept, and psychological well-being. <i>Humor</i>, 6, 89-89.</p> <p>Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. <i>Journal of Research in Personality</i>, 37(1), 48-75.</p> <p>Skinner, N., & Brewer, N. (2002). The dynamics of threat and challenge appraisals prior to stressful achievement events. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 83(3), 678.</p> <p>Thorson, J., & Powell, F. (1993). Development and validation of a multidimensional sense of humor scale. <i>Journal of Clinical Psychology</i>, 48, 13-23.</p>

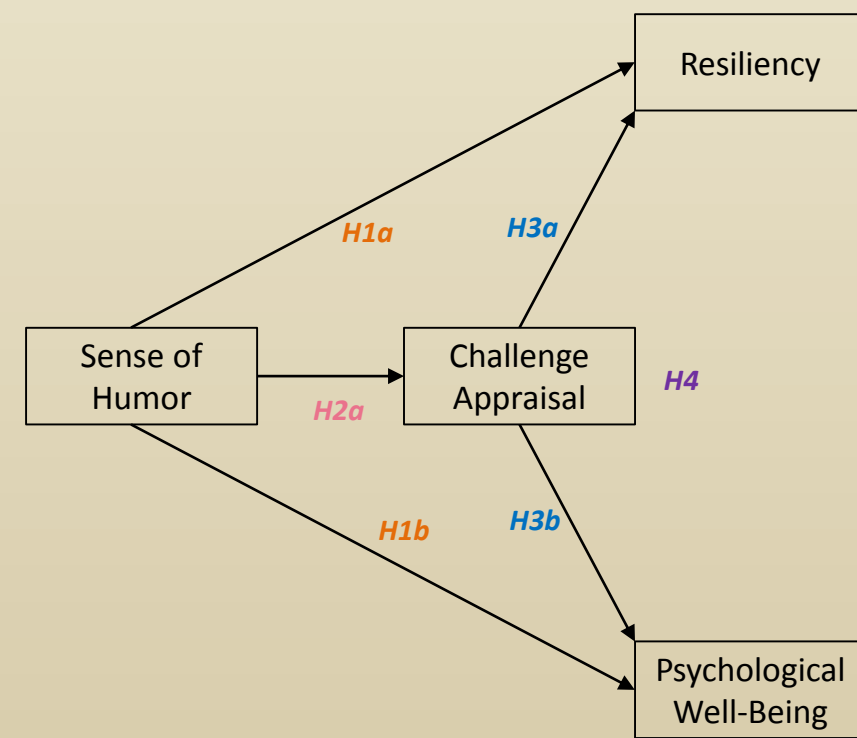


Figure 1. Standardized regression coefficients of the mediation model.
 *Note.
 * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$