

The Highly Sensitive Person, Connectedness to Nature and Environmental Behavior: The Role of Awe

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Introduction

- The 'Highly Sensitive Person' (HSP) describes 20-30% of the population who are more responsive to their environment (Aron et al., 2012; Lionetti et al., 2018).
- They have high levels of empathy and high emotional responsivity (Acevedo et al., 2014; Aron et al., 2012).
- HSPs have an affinity for nature and tend to experience awe more often in their daily lives (Aron, 2011; Aron et al., 2018).
- Awe directs attention outward and increases feelings of connectedness (Shiota et al., 2007)
- Awe is associated with connectedness to nature (Yang et al., 2018)
- Awe also leads to a 'smaller self' which increases prosocial behaviour (Piff et al., 2015)
- This leads to increases in environmental intentions and attitudes (Zhao et al., 2018)
- HSPs reflective nature means they may consider the distant outcomes of their behaviour more often (Aron, 2011).
- Considering future consequences is related to increased environmental behavior (Strathman et al., 1994).



Hypotheses

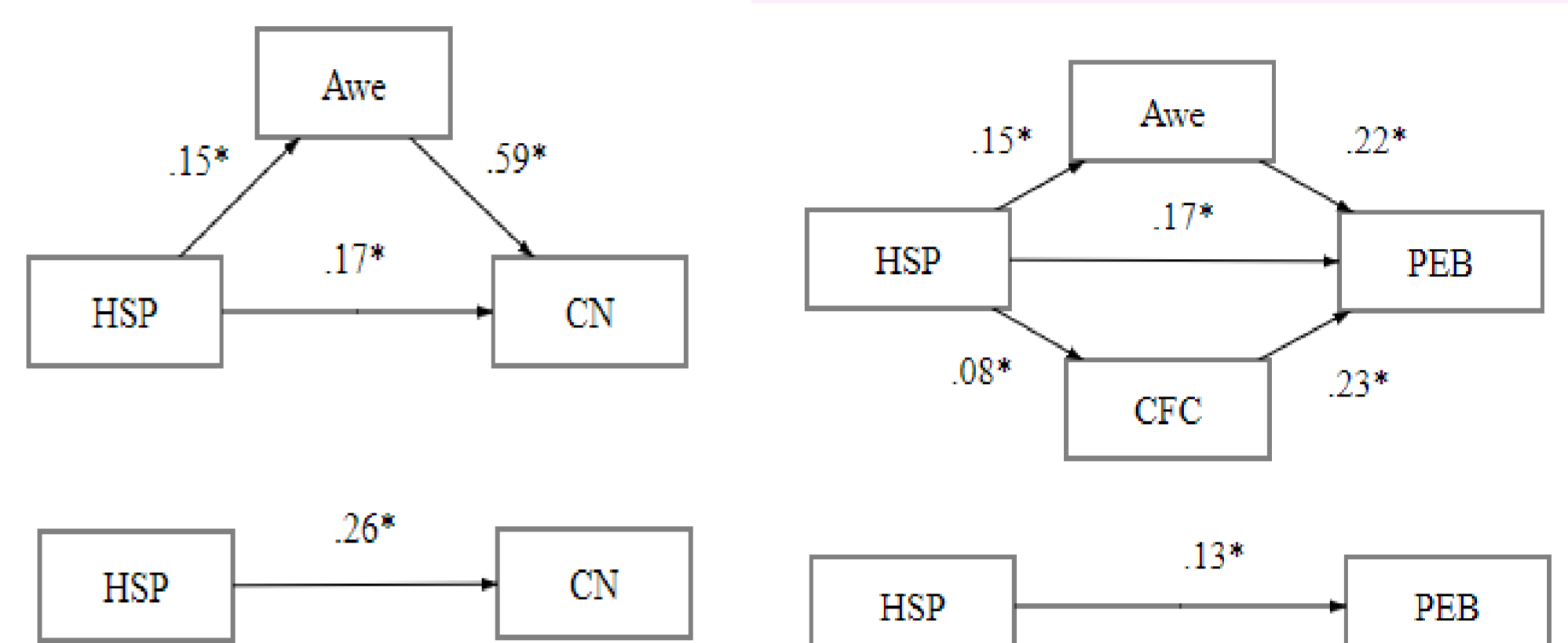
1. HSPs disposition to experience awe mediates their connection with nature.
2. HSPs disposition to experience awe mediates their level of environmental behavior.
3. HSPs consider the future consequences of their behavior more often
4. This mediates their level of environmental behavior

Methodology

- 807 Participants using online sites and through the university
- 75% female, 23% male, 2% other
- Age ranged from 18 to 78 years ($M=30.44$, $SD=13.87$).
- Online Survey: 5 scales presented in random order
- 1. HSP-12 scale (Lionetti et al., 2018).
- 2. Dispositional awe scale (Shiota et al., 2006).
- 3. Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS; Mayer & Frantz, 2004).
- 4. Consideration for Future Consequences Scale (CFCS; Strathman et al., 1994).
- 5. Pro-Environmental Behavior Scale (PEBS; Markle, 2013)
- Data Analysis: Bivariate Analysis, Mediation analyses, Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Results

- Awe partially mediated the link between HSPs and Connectedness to Nature (CN)
- Awe partially mediated the link between HSPs and Pro-Environmental Behavior (PEB)
- HSPs tendency to consider the future consequences of their behavior(CFC) partially mediated their relationship with pro-environmental behavior



*Significant at level $p < .05$

Discussion

- Awe dissolves the boundary between the self and nature, so HSPs feel more connected with the natural world.
- Awe promotes a collective mindset, increasing HSPs pro-environmental behavior.
- HSPs reflective nature means they consider the future outcomes of their behaviour more often, and so engage in more environmental behavior.

Implications

- Awe and CN are linked to wellbeing → potential intervention for HSPs (Rudd et al., 2012; Nisbet et al., 2011)
- Integrating awe stimuli in daily life may increase sustainable behavior e.g., Public Art



Future Directions

- Seek to replicate with experimentally induced awe
- Awe can be a negative emotion-may not have same effects (Gordon et al., 2017)
- Increase diversity of the sample (Henrich et al., 2010).
- HSPs trait absorption may explain their dispositional awe (Ballew & Omoto, 2018; Jonsson et al., 2014)

Conclusion

- More research is needed to understand what makes HSP flourish, what their strengths are and how they can incorporate these into their everyday life.
- This study identified awe as one of the HSPs strengths, enhancing both their connection with nature and their environmental behaviour