

*Review Article*

# Exploring the Big Five Theory: Unveiling the Dynamics and Dimensions of Personality

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**Abstract**

This study aims to explore personality, which can be understood as a dynamic set of psychophysical systems that influence an individual's thoughts, behaviors, and conduct. Contemporary psychologists often refer to the Big Five Theory, a prominent approach that proposes five universal traits that summarize a person's character. These key traits are extroversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Through content analysis, this qualitative research gathers valuable information to shed light on the unique nature of each of these traits. In its broadest sense, personality is defined as a dynamic and well-organized collection of characteristics that significantly impact an individual's thinking, motivation, and actions across various situations and contexts.

**Keywords:** Big Five Theory; personality; meta-analysis.**Introductions**

This article delves into the concept of personality and its significance in defining individuals. Each person possesses a distinctive set of traits and mannerisms that contribute to their unique personality, along with other distinguishing features like appearance, temperament, and mental processes (Fiest and Fiest, 2008). Allport (as cited in Nicholson, 2000) shares this perspective, emphasizing that an individual's personality is what truly defines them. These differences in personalities, as suggested by Engler (2003), stem from a combination of hereditary and environmental factors. However, some controversies arise concerning the extent of genes' influence versus extraneous factors (Robbins, 2000). The "big five" hypothesis has gained wide acceptance, identifying five fundamental characteristics that define human personality: extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Numerous studies, such as those by Norman (2017), Smith (2017), Goldberg (2011), and McCrae & Costa (2007), have further supported this theory after Fiske's initial research in 1919.

Personality can be comprehended through an individual's thoughts, actions, feelings, and interactions with others. Observable differences among humans (Rahimi, 2007) underscore the significance of these traits, encompassing inventiveness, challenges, perspectives, and self-confidence. The article's main objective is to explore the value of having a unique character, as personalities are what truly distinguish individuals from one another on a psychological level (Astin, 2013).

**Characteristics of personality**

Personality, originating from the Latin word "persona" meaning "mask," is a loanword incorporated into the English language. In Greek culture, the mask was an essential element of a performer's costume. Ryckman (2004) defines personality as a dynamic and organized collection of attributes that individuals utilize to influence their thoughts, feelings, and actions across diverse situations.

According to Pervin (2015), personality is shaped by a person's social interactions and the role they assume in society. The ability to adapt to different environments is influenced by factors such as organization, temperament, intelligence, physical stability, and personality traits. Additionally, personality can be associated with an individual's level of psychological maturity.

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Mishel (2008) characterizes personality as a habitual pattern of behaviour, while Allport (2011) describes it as a regulating system encompassing an individual's unique set of ideas and actions, including traits like diligence and patience.

Hans Eysenck (2011) views personality as a combination of a person's relatively stable physical characteristics, organized character, temperament, and intellect. In contrast, Kagen and Segal (1988) define personality as an overall pattern comprising thinking, feeling, behaviour, and the environment.

Watson (2019) associates' personality with behaviourism and the philosophy of behaviour. A concise definition of personality is "a person's unique way of retaining and expressing attitudes, values, and behaviours."

### ***Big Five of Trait Personality***

According to Allport and Asmawati (2003), a trait refers to the entire neural system's capacity to function as both a transmitter and receiver, enabling continuous adaptation and providing an explanation for behaviour.

In the realm of personality psychology, Goldberg (2003) formulated a comprehensive five-factor model of personality, drawing insights from scientific research. A significant symposium in Honolulu brought together renowned psychologists, including Goldberg, Tekemoto-Chock, Comrey, and Digman (John, Naumann, and Soto, 2008), who critically evaluated various personality tests to identify the most effective measures of openness to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and agreeableness, ultimately giving rise to the well-known Big Five model. Notably, the Big Five traits have demonstrated remarkable stability over time (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000).

1. ***Extroverted:*** Extroversion is associated with a natural ease and comfort in social situations, accompanied by a vibrant and positive outlook on life. Those with extroverted tendencies possess a strong drive for achievement and actively seek opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment. They enjoy being the centre of attention in group settings and are not hesitant to take the lead when necessary. On the other hand, introverts are characterized as more reserved and introspective individuals. They may appear less expressive with their emotions and tend to pay closer attention to details. Introverts find solace in solitude and often seek time alone to recharge and reflect.

In summary, extroverts thrive in social interactions, while introverts prefer more quiet and solitary settings, showing contrasting preferences and behaviours in their approach to the world.

2. ***Harmony:*** An agreeable person values harmony and cooperation, displaying traits such as consideration, friendliness, generosity, supportiveness, and tolerance. They maintain a positive outlook on others, believing that people are generally kind, polite, and honest. Agreeable individuals also tend to prefer communities that exhibit these positive traits. In contrast, disagreeable individuals prioritize their own interests over others', often neglecting the well-being and feelings of those around them. They may harbour feelings of suspicion, mistrust, and stubbornness, making it challenging for them to form harmonious relationships with others.

3. ***Conscientiousness:*** This trait demonstrates a higher level of responsibility, organization, systematization, and attention to detail compared to the previous one. They are committed to following the stated timetable and ensuring tasks are completed as planned. On the other hand, individuals lacking conscientiousness tend to be disorganized and unreliable. They may show a preference for sloppy organization and neglect to put things back in their proper places after use. Moreover, such individuals frequently fail to complete assigned tasks as expected.

4. ***Neuroticism:*** Anxiety, anger, and other negative emotions are inherent human responses to external stimuli. Individuals experiencing these emotions often perceive ordinary situations as threatening, leading to quick feelings of anger and stress. Mood swings are common in this group, making rational thinking and decision-making challenging, while stress management becomes more difficult. On the other hand, steady emotions entail being in control of one's feelings, experiencing a lack of negative emotions, and being less easily influenced by

unfavorable external factors. Individuals with steady emotions are better equipped to navigate challenging situations with composure and stability.

5. Openness to Experience refers to the receptivity and willingness to embrace new perspectives and various forms of change.

### *Character, personality, and trait differences*

Character and personality are distinct concepts that contribute to an individual's unique identity. Personality encompasses the organization of various aspects, including character, temperament, intellect, physical attributes, thinking style, behaviour, and emotions. It defines what makes a person distinct, including their ways of thinking, behaving, feeling, and reacting. According to Allport (2006), there are 17,953 detectable personality traits in humans, and Eysenck (1990) viewed some of these traits as biologically influenced and inherited from specific lineages, although he also emphasized the importance of environmental factors in studying behaviour.

Character, on the other hand, is just one facet of an individual's overall personality. It is often judged by the community based on shared cultural norms and includes moral qualities such as sincerity, tolerance, compassion, and respect. Traits, which originate from internal motivations and influence behaviours, set individuals apart. Examples of personality traits include the ability to work well with others, assertiveness, passivity, calmness, anxiousness, responsibility, and openness.

Buss (2002) distinguishes traits as internal motivations that shape behaviour, contrasting them with observable responses. Ma'rof and Haslinda (2004) argue that traits are objectively observable and measurable aspects of a person, representing consistent and reliable attributes. Allport highlights that defining traits are what make individuals unique, being present in their neural system, heritable, and contributing to effective behaviour.

Raymond Cattell (2008) focuses on the structural and motivational components of personality, viewing traits as parts of existing behaviour with distinct temporal and contextual patterns. He acknowledges the significance of interactions between traits and environmental factors in shaping behaviour. Overall, the concept of traits suggests that behaviour follows established patterns, remaining relatively stable across time and situations.

### *Factors Affecting Personality Development*

The development of a person's personality is influenced by several factors. Psychologists have identified several variables that play a role in shaping how individuals develop their personalities. Among these variables are experiences, genetics, and social culture, as pointed out by Asmawati (2015).

According to Kamaluzaman (2009), the elements that impact personality development can be categorized into two main categories: heredity and environment. The environment encompasses a person's early experiences with their family, friends, school, and community. On the other hand, genetic variables include physical characteristics, body type, and emotions. In summary, both genetics and the environment contribute significantly to the development of an individual's personality.

A person's personality is a complex and diverse construct shaped by their upbringing, experiences, and interactions with others. Psychological theory highlights several significant influences that come into play during a person's formative years. Some of these influences include:

- 1. Genetics and Heredity:** Studies suggest that personality traits could be influenced by genes in ways beyond our current understanding. Characteristics such as introversion/extroversion, emotional stability, and impulsivity may have a heritable component. However, it is essential to note that personality is not solely determined by genetics; rather, genes provide a predisposition towards certain traits. Other environmental and social factors also play a significant role in shaping an individual's personality.

- 2. Environment:** The circumstances of one's upbringing and early life can exert a powerful influence on their character. Early life experiences, family dynamics, parenting style, and socioeconomic conditions all play a significant role in shaping an

individual's personality. These factors collectively contribute to the development and formation of a person's character as they grow and mature.

**3. Culture:** The character of an individual is profoundly impacted by their upbringing and the cultural beliefs and customs they are exposed to. Personality expressions can differ significantly from one society to another due to the influence of cultural biases towards particular traits and behaviours. The unique cultural context in which a person is raised shapes their values, attitudes, and behaviours, contributing to the diversity and variation of personalities across different societies.

**4. Social Learning:** Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn and adopt behaviours by observing and imitating others. This learning process occurs through exposure to influential figures in their lives, such as parents, friends, and other adults. People can readily absorb attitudes and routines by observing these role models and integrating their behaviours into their own repertoire.

**5. Education and Schooling:** The influence of education on an individual's character and intelligence reaches far beyond the confines of the classroom. It encompasses the entire educational environment, including the school itself, the teachers, and the interactions with fellow students. These elements collectively shape a person's character and intelligence, as they not only acquire knowledge but also develop social skills, values, and attitudes through their educational experiences.

**6. Life Experiences:** The experiences, whether positive or negative, that a person goes through in life can have a lasting impact on their character. Traumatic events like bereavement or abuse can particularly trigger significant changes in one's personality. These experiences may lead to shifts in their character traits and the adoption of new coping strategies as they navigate through the challenges and effects of such events.

**7. Cognitive Processes:** The way an individual thinks, feels, and remembers can shape their character. For instance, someone with a pessimistic outlook may behave differently from their more optimistic counterpart. The interplay between thoughts, emotions, and memories influences how a person perceives and responds to various situations, ultimately influencing their overall character and behavior.

**8. Biological Factors:** Biological variables, such as brain anatomy, neurotransmitter levels, and hormonal influences, along with genetics, can have a significant impact on personality and behaviour. These physiological factors play a crucial role in shaping an individual's psychological traits, tendencies, and responses to various stimuli, contributing to the complexity of human personality and behavior.

**9. Gender:** Societal norms and gender roles can exert an influence on the expression of personality. Traditional gender standards have the potential to affect men and women differently, shaping their behaviours and preferences in distinctive ways. These societal expectations may contribute to the divergence in how individuals of different genders manifest and exhibit their personalities.

**10. Temperament:** The temperament of an individual, referring to their innate tendency for particular emotional and behavioural responses, can have enduring effects on the development of their personality.



**Figure 1.** Factors Affecting personality

### Conclusion

Individuals display diversity in various aspects, including interests, behaviours, and responses to their environment. Personality traits serve as a means of observing and understanding this diversity. Personal development courses and interventions can be customized for each person by considering their trait personality, career interests, tendencies, and approaches. Teachers, educators, counselors, and parents can utilize their knowledge of character traits to guide their students, clients, and children towards happiness and well-being. Understanding one's trait personality is crucial for selecting effective methods and interventions for personal growth and development throughout life. Consequently, personality studies hold significance in every field.

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