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Research Paper

Relationship between the Big Five Personality Traits and Aggression

Psychology

KEYWORDS : Big Five Personality traits, Aggression.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship between the Big Five Personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism) and aggression among males and females between the age-group of 18 to 24 years. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) and The Aggression Questionnaire were administered on 50 males and 50 females and the correlation coefficient was computed. The results indicated that there is a significant high positive correlation between the Big Five traits and aggression among the males, females and in the total sample.

Introduction & Literature Review

Personality Traits:

Personality can be defined as the distinctive and characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior that make up an individual's personal style of interacting with the physical and social environment. (Smith, Hoeksema, Frederickson & Loftus, 2003).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV TR), personality traits are enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts. Traits are consistent, enduring way of thinking, feeling or behaving. Traits are relatively stable over time; differ among individuals, and influence behavior. (Ciccerelli & Meyer, 2008).

The Big Five Personality Traits:

The Big Five personality traits are five broad domains or dimensions of personality that are used to describe human personality. The theory based on the Big Five factors is called the "Five Factor Model". (McCrae & John, 1992) (Baron, 2008).

- Openness to experience refers to appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, imagination, curiosity, and variety of experience. People high on openness are intellectually curious, appreciative of art, and sensitive to beauty. People low on openness have more conventional, traditional interests, they prefer the plain, straightforward, and obvious over the complex, ambiguous, and subtle.
- Conscientiousness is a tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement against measures or outside expectations, preference for planned rather than spontaneous behavior. It influences the way in which we control, regulate, and direct our impulses.
- Extraversion is characterized by positive emotions, the tendency to seek out stimulation and the company of others. Extroverts enjoy being with people, they tend to be enthusiastic, action-oriented individuals.Introverts have lower social engagement; they tend to seem quiet, low-key, deliberate, and less involved in the social world.
- Agreeableness is a tendency to be compassionate and cooperative towards others and concern for social harmony. Agreeable individuals are generally considerate, friendly, generous, helpful, and willing to compromise their interests with others and they have an optimistic view of human nature.
- Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotional states. It is a cluster of negative traits like emotional instability, anxiety, hostility, depression, self- consciousness and impulsiveness. People high on neuroticism are emotionally reactive and have low tolerance for stress.

Aggression:

Aggression refers to actions that intentionally inflict harm on others. It is a behavior directed towards the goal of harming another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. (Baron, Branscombe, Byrne & Bhardwaj, 2010). Aggression can be classified into 4 main types: Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger and Hostility.

- Physical aggression means aggressive actions involving physical contact, such as pushing or hitting, physical means are used to cause harm.
- Verbal aggression is basically a destructive form of communication. Aggression is expressed verbally, through words and not actions.
- Anger refers to an emotional state that involves displeasure and consists of subjective feelings that vary in intensity, from mild irritation or annoyance to intense fury and rage.
- Hostility is a negative evaluation of persons and things, often accompanied by a clear desire to do harm to them. It as a negative attitude that mixes anger and disgust.

Big Five Personality Traits and Aggression:

Researchers have sought to understand the relation between aggression and dimensions of personality using the five-factor model. The Neuroticism and Agreeableness dimensions appear to be particularly associated with aggression.

Agreeableness is characterized as good-natured, trustful, and cooperative. It is negatively related to aggressive behavior and violence. Conscientiousness is characterized by being responsible, orderly, and dependable, and tends to be negatively related to aggression. Neuroticism, characterized by being easily upset and emotionally unstable, is positively related to aggressive behavior. Openness, characterized by being intellectual, polished, and independent-minded, tends to be unrelated to aggressive behavior. Extraversion is characterized as being talkative, assertive, and energetic and its relations with aggression are mixed. (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Bettencourt, Talley, Benjamin & Valentine (2006) conducted a comprehensive review to understand the relation between personality and aggressive behavior, under provoking and non-provoking conditions, it was found that some personality variables influenced aggressive behavior under both neutral and provocation conditions,whereas others influenced aggressive behavior only under provocation. Also there are possible relations between the patterns of aggressive behavior and the personality dimensions of Neuroticism and Agreeableness.

Barlett & Anderson (2012) tested the direct and indirect effects of the Big 5personality traits on aggressive behavior. Results showed that Openness and Agreeableness were both directly and indirectly related to physical aggression, but were only indi-

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rectly related (through aggressive attitudes) to violent behavior. Similarly, Neuroticism was both directly and indirectly (through aggressive emotions) related to physical aggression, but not to violent behavior.

Study conducted by Sharpe and Desai (2001) (as cited in Bettencourt et al., 2006) showed that the Agreeableness dimension was highly and negatively related to all of the subscales in the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire but that the Neuroticism dimension was more highly and positively related to the Anger and Hostility subscales than to the Physical and Verbal Aggression subscales.

Methodology

Aim:

The aim of this study was to explore relationship between The Big Five Personality Traits and Aggression among males and females in the age-group of 18 to 24 years.

Sample:

The total sample size was 100 college students which consisted of 50 males and 50 females in the age group of 18 to 24 years.

Tools:

1. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) by John & Srivastava: It consists of 44 statements about one's perception of self in a variety of situations. On a scale of 1 to 5, one has to select a number that indicates the strength of his or her agreement with each statement (1-Strong Disagreement and 5-Strong Agreement). The total of the points on each of the five personality scales gives the total score for that personality trait. (John & Srivastava, 1999).
2. The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss & Perry: It consists of 29 statements; one has to indicate how uncharacteristic or characteristic each statement is in describing himself or herself on a 5 point scale. The total points for all the statements give the final score for the level of aggression. (Buss & Perry, 1992).

Results and Discussion

In case of males, the highest correlation was obtained for the factor openness followed by extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness. Among females too, the highest correlation was obtained for factor openness then followed by neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness and extraversion. In the total sample, the factor openness had the highest correlation followed by neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness.

Table: Correlation Coefficients between Aggression and the Big Five Personality traits among males, females and total sample.

Personality Traits	Males ('r' values)	Females ('r' values)	Total Sample ('r' values)
Openness	0.978	0.980	0.978
Conscientiousness	0.966	0.969	0.962
Extraversion	0.976	0.958	0.965
Agreeableness	0.956	0.963	0.954
Neuroticism	0.972	0.973	0.972
Total (N)	50	50	100

All the 'r values' were found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Openness was found to have the highest correlation with aggression in males, females and in the total sample whereas agreeableness was found to have the least correlation with aggression. Neuroticism was found to have the second highest correlation in females while extraversion was found to have the second highest correlation in males. No significant differences were found in the correlation coefficients between males and females.

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