

Analysis of the big five personality factors and education



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The study of personality has a long history in psychology, with many different approaches focusing on different aspects of personality with plenty of theories, for example, humanistic approach, psychodynamic approach, and the social learning approach just to name a few. It also has many different theories, the more prominent ones being Cattell's sixteen personality factors, and the Big-Five. There is no consensus on the measurement of personality, but in this paper, we are going to focus on the Big-Five, which is measured by the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992). It is a well-established questionnaire with 240 questions on a five-point Likert scale to measure the Big-Five personality: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, and Conscientiousness.

Many psychologists have done research on the relationship between personality and academic performance (Trapmann, Hell, Hirn, & Schuler, 2007; Chamorro-Premuzic, & Furnham, 2003; De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996), concluding that personality has an influence on an individual's academic performance. Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2003) investigated the extent to which different personality traits predict academic performance. They did a longitudinal study on university students in Britain to find out the relationship between personality traits and academic performance. Results showed that some personality traits were significantly related to final-year project and exam results. Logically, personality should affect school performance. An individual's attitude of excellence, responsibility, persistence and sociability should contribute to school performance. Students with high levels of persistence should get relatively better grades as one can expect to meet problems and frustrations in their

quest to achieve good academic results. Individuals who are more achievement-oriented rather than people-oriented should also get better grades as they find satisfaction in their work and focus more on studying than individuals who are people-oriented, who likes to socialise more and seek out pleasurable activities. This paper looks at the relationship between some of the Big-Five personality factors and academic performance.

Extraversion is defined as the quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction, sociability, encompassing traits such as assertiveness, activity, and the tendencies to which one experience positive emotions (Costa & McCrae, 1992). One might expect extraverted people to perform better than introverted people. However, Goff and Ackerman (1992) found negative relationship between Extraversion and academic performance in high school and university. This could be the consequences of the difference in time spent acquiring knowledge between introverts, who spend more time studying, and extraverts, who spend more time socializing (Rolfhus and Ackerman, 1999). Another explanation is that introverts may also be better in learning, coupled with better study habits and lower distractibility (Eysenck & Cookson, 1969).

The results reported by Goff and Ackerman (1992) are consistent with Eysenck and Cookson's (1969) findings. They found that the relationships between Extraversion and academic performance are affected by age and level of education. Extraverted children before the age of 11-12 years old would generally perform better than introverted children. This correlation would change in secondary and university levels as introverts tend to perform better than extraverts in higher education. The reason for this <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-big-five-personality-factors-and-education/>

change is because higher education involves more analytical skills and complex tasks, which would require more preparation than just interaction and socialising with people.

In contrast, Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2003) did not find Extraversion to be clearly related to academic performance, only partly related. They found that Extraversion was positively related to final-year project results, but there were no relations between Extraversion and exam results. The relationship between Extraversion and final-year project results can be explained by the interpersonal skills of Extraverts, which students need to get along with their supervisors and group mates. Furnham et al. (1998) suggested that the extraverts do better on timed test, while introverts tend to do better on longer and non-timed tests. The results presented suggests that Extraversion does play some part in contributing to academic performance, with variables such as age and the way to measure academic performance affecting the prediction of academic results.

Neuroticism consists of facets like depression, anxiety, impulsivity, angry hostility and self-consciousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Several studies have reported significant relations between Neuroticism and academic performance (De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996; Furnham, Chamorro-Premuzic, & McDougall, 2003). Highly neurotic students, especially at university level, generally perform poorer academically than low neurotics (De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996). Low neurotics tend to score better on ability tests, possibly because they are less affected by anxiety (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003).

In the pursuit of academic success, it is inherent that there will be obstacles and stressful situations. Since high neurotics are associated with low self-estimated intelligence (Furnham et al., 2003), it is likely that this may increase the anxiety of neurotic people which may prevent them from functioning as usual (De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996). Thus, students low on neurotic tends to perform better than high neurotic students.

Facets of Openness to Experience involve creativity, originality, imagination and artistic sensibility (McCrae, 1994). One might expect people high on Openness to Experience to have good academic results. Relations between Openness to Experience and academic performance have mixed results. Blickle (1996) reported that Openness to Experience is associated with academic performance. As Openness to Experience is associated with intellectual ability, especially general knowledge and vocabulary (Goff & Ackerman, 1992), this association is between Openness to Experience and academic performance is often explained by the fact that Openness to Experience is correlated to intelligence. Blickle's findings were in contrast to several studies which found that Openness to Experience has no significant correlations to academic performance (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2003; Trapmann et al., 2007). The ambiguity of Openness to Experience supported by the differing results suggests that it is difficult to conclude that there is a relation between Openness to Experience and academic performance.

The personality factor that is most often linked to academic performance is Conscientiousness (De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996). It encompasses the drive to accomplish things, which contains the characteristics necessary to

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-big-five-personality-factors-and-education/>

pursue it: hard-working, achievement-oriented, organized, persistent, and careful (Goldberg, 1992). People who achieve good academic results usually possess most of these traits (Taylor, 1964). Taylor found out that students who achieve good results are persistent and have the capacity to be hard-working for longer periods. Persistence is associated with conscientiousness. One of the earliest questionnaires developed to measure persistence was invented by Wang (1932). His scale, which is called "A Self-Appraisal Schedule", contains 111 questions, many of which pertain to tenaciousness, concentration, energy, and dutifulness, traits that can be easily identified now under the Big-Five Personality Factor of Conscientiousness. Because persistent and conscientious students tend to be more hard-working and attend classes more regularly, they tend to complete their course work assignments and perform better for continuous assessments.

De Raad and Schouwenburg (1996) found out that higher levels of dutifulness, responsibility, organization, and achievement-orientation are associated with conscientiousness, which may enhance the likelihood of succeeding academically. A longitudinal study on a sample of university students by Furnham, Chamorro-Premuzic, & McDougall (2003) showed that there were positive and significant relationships between conscientiousness and academic performance. Meta-analysis also revealed that conscientiousness is the only Big-Five trait that is valid in predicting academic performance in college and university (Trapmann et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be expected that conscientious students will obtain better marks for essays and score well in higher education.

Taylor (1964) summarizes the difference between academic achievers and underachievers adequately. As compared to achievers, underachievers tend to be unmotivated to do well academically, more likely to be depressed and anxious about test, and are overly critical of others.

In conclusion, the amount of evidence shown in this essay would seem to support the notion that personality traits can generally be used to predict academic performances, particularly the Big-Five personality trait of Conscientiousness. A possible implication of these studies could affect the way universities accept students. They could use well-established personality test like NEO-PI-R, which measures the Big-Five personality traits, to select students based on their personality. In this way, universities will take an important step forward to selecting students that have the highest chance of achieving good academic results.