

Five factor model of personality psychology essay



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Personality is a term used to describe an individual based on various sets of characteristics, for example; kindness, loyalty, honesty, or selfishness. These characteristics often describe a wide range of behaviors, attitudes, and interests. Personality psychologists have tirelessly debated, theorized, analyzed countless numbers of ways on how to identify, classify, and measure these factors or dimensions of personality, but still disagreements remain. From the time of Sigmund Freud, attempts at uncovering and defining what the most important ways are in which people differ in their emotional, interpersonal, experiential, attitudinal, and motivational styles, have continuously been met with criticisms. Critics aside, however, there have been significant contributions made throughout history that have been adopted to comprise one of the fields more widely accepted theories of illustrating ones personality. McCrae and Costa's (1992) Five-Factor Model (FFM) is a descriptive trait approach to personality.

Carl Jung's Neo-Analytic approach to the development of personality challenged that of Sigmund Freud's; proving later to be an essential component to the trait theory of personality. Carl Jung's ideas about personality put great emphasis on the processes that occur within the individual instead of only focusing on the relationships between people and society. Thus, a largely influential aspect of Carl Jung's theory of personality was his theory of 'Introversion and Extroversion' (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). Jung believed that there were patterns to a person's behavior that were based on his or her internal mental thought processes. Jung developed the idea of introversion and extroversion to explain personality and the behavior of people. According to Jung, introverts focus internally as a means

of exploring ones feelings and experiences, while extroverts tend to focus on things external to themselves (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). McCrae & Costa (1992) adopt and expand on this concept by explaining that extroverts are found to be social people who are friendly, energetic, optimistic, and assertive, whereas introverts are more reserved, cautious, and independent.

Currently, McCrae & Costa's (1992) Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality is probably the most popular and accepted trait theory in personality psychology. Costa and McCrae's well-known and now revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) is widely used as a means for evaluating personality. This model measures five universal traits that relate to an individual's overall self (Costa & McCrae, 1992). These five factors, also referred to as dimensions, of personality are: Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), Neuroticism (N), and Openness to Experience (O). Although some psychologist may not agree with the theory's 5 factors, the characteristics they identify with do maintain a strong support. The table below lists the Five Factors and some commonly associated adjectives that may describe an average or relative high scoring individual within each dimension.

Five-Factors Factor Definers

Extroversion (E) Active Talkative Sociability

Energetic Enthusiastic Outgoing

Agreeable (A) Appreciative Forgiving Generous

Kind Sympathetic Trusting

Conscientiousness (C) Efficient Organized Self-Disciplined

Reliable Responsible Thorough

Neuroticism (N) Anxious Self-pitying Tense

Touchy Unstable Worrying

Openness (O) Artistic Intelligence Imaginative

Insightful Original Wide Interests

The article, ' Implementing a Five-Factor personality inventory for use on the Internet' (Buchanan, Johnson, & Lewis, 2005), emphasizes the possibilities for further research findings about personality using the internet and its accessibility. John Johnson in 2000 developed a " web-mediated version of an International Personality Item Pool representation of the Five-Factor Model" (Buchanan, Johnson, & Lewis, 2005). The idea behind Johnson's implemented version was to " develop an online instrument with demonstrably acceptable psychometric properties, for use in internet-mediated psychological research" (Buchanan, Johnson, & Lewis, 2005). Today, consensus over the Five-Factor Model (FFM) has grown and as the article ' Internet Personality Inventory' emphasizes, applying this web based method " as an instrument for measuring the five dimensions of personality could prove to be extremely useful for online research and data collection" - a measure which is said to have shown valid and reliable results (Buchanan, Johnson, & Lewis, 2005).

The relatively short online assessment asks participants to score each question from Very Accurate to Very Inaccurate – questions topics consisted of education, mood, political stance, and personal relations to others. After completion of the online personality assessment – based on the Five-Factor Model – my responses were calculated and the results I received were as follow:

Five-Factors Score/Results

Extroversion (E) (41) Relatively High

Agreeable (A) (31) Relatively High

Conscientiousness (C) (44) Relatively High

Neuroticism (N) (14) Relatively Low

Openness (O) (29) Relatively High

Based on my results, I scored relatively high (top 30%) above the sample mean in all categories except Neuroticism (N), in which I scored relatively low (bottom 30%) below the sample mean. According to the theory if a person receives a certain score in the NEO-PI (Costa & McCrae), then this score should allow for predictions to their behavior and outcomes. Thus, the proceeding Factor descriptions will be in relation to my assessment score/results and what can be suggested about my personality.

As defined by Costa and McCrae (1992), Neuroticism (N) relates to the extent to which individuals exhibit anxiety, depression, and hostility as well as feel self-conscious, act impulsively, and experience a sense of vulnerability, unable to accommodate aversive events. Those receiving relatively low scores in neuroticism are said to be less easily upset and are

less emotionally reactive. Described as emotionally stable, low scoring individuals tend to have a calm and relaxed disposition enabling them to manage stressful situations.

The factor that Costa and McCrae labeled as ' Openness to Experience' (O) is the " extent to which individuals are open to fantasies, aesthetics, feelings as well as novel actions ideas, and values" (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Identified as having an active imagination and strong intellectual curiosity, high (O) scoring individuals tend to enjoy a wide range of culturally enriching experiences.

Those who score high on Extroversion (E) are described as being adventure seekers, energetic, sociable, dominant, talkative and enthusiastic. High scoring (E) individuals with their enjoyment of others and boldness, tend to rise to leadership positions, attract romantic interest, and generally feel happy and healthy (Friedman, Howard S., & Schustack, Miriam W., 2012).

Costa and McCrae (1992), state that Agreeableness (A) includes trust in other individuals, straight forward communication, altruistic and cooperative behavior, compliance rather than defiance, modesty and humility, as well as tender, sympathetic attitudes. Scoring high in agreeableness, individuals tend to be friendly, admired, and genuinely enjoy helping others.

Conscientiousness (C) relates to the degree to which individuals are competent - preferring order and structure, dutiful, motivated to achieve goals, disciplined, and deliberate or considered (Costa & McCrae, 1992). High (C) scores are associated with strong academic and occupational achievement and living longer healthier lives. These achievements can be

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attributed to their persistence, responsibility, and strong sense of purpose (Friedman, Howard S., & Schustack, Miriam W., 2012)

The scores and feedback I received from the - web-mediated version of the (FFM) - assessment as detailed above, I would strongly agree to it being a rather accurate depiction of my personality. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that my results placed me beyond the mean in either direction. I had expected to score around average. The only other point I might add would be that due to the relatively short style of the questionnaire, the questions themselves tended to be very general with little variation. I feel that this could have helped inflate/deflate my overall scores for each of the dimensions. As opposed to a slightly longer questionnaire that presented a greater variation of questions which may have offered a more refined result outcome.

Psychologists have approached the topic of personality from many different perspectives. Probably the most popular and accepted trait theory in personality psychology, Costa and McCrae's (1992) NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI) proves to be a valuable and affective measure of normal personality traits. It provides an in-depth understanding and interpretation of an individual; along with identifiable strengths and weakness to their personality. The five-factor model doesn't claim to provide psychologist with an exhaustive explanation on personality, but it does provide the most logical explanation of its structure.