



Personality, Achievement Motivation and Academic Performance among Sojourn Students

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Abstract

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The present study aims to study the influence of Big Five Personality on the achievement motivation and academic performance among sojourn students. The participants of the study consist of 57 sojourn students, in the age group of 17 to 22. Neo Five Factor Inventory and Stanford Achievement Test were used to collect from the participants. Grade Point Average were collected was also collected from the participants. The results revealed that no significant correlation between the Big Five personality traits and achievement motivation; and academic performance. The findings of this study are intriguing because it provides an impetus to future researchers to find out why there is no relationship between personality, achievement motivation and academic performance among sojourn students, and what cultural factors are at play here..

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A 'sojourn' refers to a short period of time when a person stays in a particular place. The word 'sojourn' comes from the French root word 'jour' meaning day, and the stay is thus not permanent, and merely of temporary residence (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

In recent times, trends in obtaining a valuable higher education have resulted in an rise in the number of students who study elsewhere. Due to better opportunities and better educational facilities elsewhere other than their place of origin, students tend to travel to other places to complete their education. However, regardless of the extent of the period of residence, it is undeniable that the stay in a different place is capable of influencing an individual in numerous ways.

For example, during their stay in a different place, sojourn students not only have to adjust themselves to the culture of their educational institution, but also to the culture of the place they move to, for study. This process plays an important role in shaping the individual. Due to the altered environment that they are working in, their responses to the environment around them are different from what they would otherwise be. Various psychological constructs such as personality, intelligence, motivation and achievement work differently and dynamically within these individuals, and thus, they become a matter of intrigue for psychologists. (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1990).

The concept of 'achievement' has been studied extensively in the field of psychology. The concept of achievement, however, is basically a motivation. Motives are drives that push individuals to follow a certain action. Motives thus affect the way a person thinks and behaves. There are various kinds of motives - extrinsic, intrinsic, biological or social motives. The concept of achievement has been studied under the bracket of motivation since the time of its conception.

Achievement motivation thus refers to "intense, prolonged and repeated efforts to accomplish something difficult" (Murray, 1938). It encompasses a range of actions, including "working with a singleness of purpose towards a high and distant goal and having a determination to win" (Murray, 1938).

The current study aims to understand the concept of achievement within an academic setting. Academic achievement among sojourn students is a matter of intrigue due to the

altered environment that they are working in. There are numerous factors that influence academic achievement. One of the major factors that has a significant impact is intelligence as measured by scales such as Wechsler's (1996) Intelligence scales or other intelligence scales. For a long time, cognitive variables were considered a central to achievement. However, it has been now recognized that there are several non-intelligence or non-cognitive variables that are involved in achievement as well. Personality of the individual is one such variable. Personality is the "dynamic organization within the individual of those psychosocial systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought" (Allport, 1961).

The concept of personality plays a central role in various schools of thought in modern psychology, and has been used to explain human behaviour. Personality refers to the individual differences in the way each person thinks, feels and behaves. (Larsen & Buss, 2005). Larsen and Buss have theorized that an individual's personality is an important influence in the way a person interacts with and adapts to his or her environment, whether intrapsychic, social or physical. (Larsen & Buss, 2005).

According to Costa and McCrae (1992), the main personality traits include Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Extraversion. These were the core factors, and Costa and McCrae included several related factors within the scope of these core traits as well, thus developing a model that explains personality as a combination of the Big Five Traits. Since this model integrates crucial social constructs, it is considered as one of the most comprehensive in its approach to studying personality.

Openness (O) is that facet of personality which measures the characteristic of being "sensitive to art and beauty" (McCrae, 1990). Openness is a broad facet of personality that encompasses creativity, aesthetic sensitivity, differentiated emotions and unconventional values (Rogers, 1961). Goldberg (1990) defines the term as being intelligent, perceptive and imaginative and researchers such as Digman (1990) and Hogan (1986) identify it with intellect. Openness is the only facet of personality, according to Costa and McCrae (1997) that is related to intelligence. As such, significant correlations have been found between Openness and all form of crystallized intelligence (Ackerman & Heggestad, 1997).

Conscientiousness (C) is the one facet that seems directly linked to achievement. Digman and Takemoto-Chock's (1981) view of Conscientiousness as a "will to achieve" represents a very proactive picture of Conscientiousness as that facet of personality which organize and directs behavior. In contrast, Tellegen's (1982) view of Conscientiousness as constraint and Hogan's (1986) view of Conscientiousness as prudence represents this facet of personality as the one that is responsible for impulse control. Conscientiousness however, is a combination of the two, having both a dynamic aspect and a control aspect (Rolland, 1993). Conscientiousness has thus found correlations with academic achievement and intelligence tests (Krug & Johnson, 1986).

Extraversion (E) can best be explained by the following seven factors: affiliation, energy, venturesomeness, positive affectivity, ambition and ascendance (Watson & Clark, 1984). Costa and McCrae (1989) also argue that extraversion can be located midway between dominance and warmth. It has been theorized that high E scorers, due to their impulsive behavior and difficulty concentrating on academic material, perform poorly in an academic setting, (Eysenck, 1996) and the correlation between extraversion and achievement has been close to zero (Eysenck, 1994).

Agreeableness (A), another facet of personality is a highly evaluated dimension. Digman (1990) notes that at one end of the dimension of Agreeableness, there are present such characteristics as emotional support, altruism, and a caring and nurturing nature, whereas at the opposite end of the spectrum, there are present such characteristics as being hostile and indifferent to others, and being spiteful, self-centred and jealous. Because this facet of

personality involves working within a group scenario, it may play an important role while evaluating classroom behavior, rather than assessing of theoretical knowledge. As such, it has been theorized that Agreeableness does not relate closely to academic achievement (Rothstein, Paunonen, Rush & King, 1994).

Neuroticism (N) refers to the individual differences incorporating the tendency to experience emotional distress, and the behavioural and cognitive styles of the person that stem from such individual differences. Chronic negative affects (Watson & Clark, 1984) are seen in high N scorers and they often experience recurrent nervous tension, frustration, depression, self-consciousness, and guilt all of which are associated with decreased self esteem, irrational thinking, ineffective coping and a decrease in impulse control (Costa & McCrae, 1987). It has been theorized that this emotional instability of high N scorers lead to low achievement, because of their constant worries which supply parasitic information that inhibits cognition (Eysenck, 1992).

Various theories have existed regarding the importance of personality factors in influencing achievement motivation. Harris (1940) however, was the first to take note of this. Harris, in his discussion of the importance of persistence in the form of the amount of effort expended by the individual, elaborated that there are three important factors for scholastic achievement. The first essential factor, according to him was ability or intelligence in the form of scholastic aptitude which would determine an individual's scholastic achievement. The second essential factor was effort or drive, or degree of motivation, while the third essential factor according to Harris was personal, economic, social and academic circumstances.

Cattell (1965) was the next to elucidate on the importance of personality factors in academic performance. Cattell hypothesized that while university students are selected on the basis of their intelligence, their intelligence is not a sole determinant of their success in education. He suggested that other factors such as motivation, as well as personality would be as important as intelligence in predicting academic performance.

Recent research has also supported these assumptions. In fact, some of them have even proved that personality factors account for more variance in academic performance than intelligence (Bratko et al. 2006; Gilles & Bailleux 2001; Noffle & Robins 2007; Poropat 2009), and that personality is a much more powerful predictor at higher levels of education than intelligence (Conard 2006; Di Fabio & Busoni 2007; Fumham & Chamorro-Premuzic 2004; Fumham et al. 2003; Petrides et al. 2005).

There have been numerous studies that show a correlation mainly between one of the Big Five traits, i.e. conscientiousness, and academic performance. A summary of 23 research studies by O' Connor and Paunonen (2007) reported an average correlation between one of the Big Five Personality traits, namely conscientiousness and academic performance. A meta analysis by Poropat (2009) also reported the same. There have been further studies as well that have shown that the Big Five traits are good predictors of performance, even after controlling for the effects of intelligence. DiFabio and Busoni (2007) showed that conscientiousness was responsible for 10% of variance, over and above intelligence, in GPA. Similarly, Bratko et al., (2006) showed that conscientiousness and extraversion was responsible for 17% of variance in academic performance. In fact, Kappe and van der Flie (2012) were able to establish that Conscientiousness was the best predictor for measures of academic performance and that this facet of personality accounted for around five times as much variance in GPA as intelligence did. Fumham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2004) also showed that along with conscientiousness and extraversion, openness to experience also contributed to the variance in grades on two Statistics examinations at university level.

However, it appears that it is only the facet of conscientiousness that has a relatively stronger correlation with achievement than the other personality traits. Results have been

mixed for both the traits of extraversion and openness to experience. Studies have consistently found a negative correlation for the traits of neuroticism and agreeableness (Turner & Johnathan, 2003; Dubey 1977; Gilles & Bailleux, 2001; Barrick & Mount, 1994; Reibman & Elizabeth, 2002).

Objective

1. To find out the relationship between the personality, achievement motivation and academic performance among sojourn students.

Method

Participants

The participants included 57 adolescents between the ages of 17 and 22 from Christ University, Bangalore, Karnataka. The non-probability, purposive sampling technique was used to select participants.

Instruments

1. Neo Five Factor Inventory: The Neo Five Factor Inventory is a self-report inventory containing 60 statements. It aims to test the individual across the personality traits of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. This scale is a revised version of Costa and McCrae's (1978) Personality Inventory. The alpha reliabilities for this scale are .79 for Extraversion, .75 for Agreeableness, .83 for Conscientiousness, .79 for Negative Emotionality, and .80 for Openness to Experience.
2. Achievement Motivation Test: The Achievement Motivation Test was developed by V.P Bhargava in 1994. It is a sentence completion test and has 50 items. Each item has three alternatives, and respondents have to select one alternative in those. The score on the scale range from above 23 (which means high achievement motivation) to below 11 (which means low motivation). The alpha reliability for this test is 0.91 and the validity index is 0.83.
3. Grade Point Average: A grade point average (GPA) is a calculated average of the letter grades that a student earns in each semester following a 0 to 4.0 scale. Every semester, a student receives a GPA based on the grades earned in all classes during that semester. Bacon, Donald R. & Bean B. (2006), in their paper 'GPA in Research Studies: An Invaluable but Neglected Opportunity' establish the reliability of GPA as ranging from .67 to .97.
4. Personal Data Sheet: Personal Data Sheet was used to collect information like age, Sex, class, Course, subject of study etc.

Results and Discussion

Before statistical analysis, the investigators have checked the assumption of normality using the Shapiro-Wilk normality test. It was found that the data was not normal, so the non-parametric statistical analysis of Spearman Correlation Coefficient was used for consolidating the data

Table 1

Normality Scores based on the Distribution Scores of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness, Achievement motivation and Grade Point Average.

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig.
Neuroticism	0.96	57	0.15
Extraversion	0.96	57	0.12
Openness	0.93	57	0.00
Agreeableness	0.96	57	0.84
Conscientiousness	0.88	57	0.00
ACMT	0.96	57	0.14
GPA	0.92	57	0.00

Table 2

Relations among variables Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness, Achievement motivation and Grade Point Average based on the distribution of the scores

Variables	N	E	O	A	C	ACMT	GPA
N	1.00	.26	.12	.26*	.16	.15	-.14
E	.26	1.00	.20	.37**	.29*	.10	.16
O	.12	.20	1.00	-.04	.36**	.06	-.00
A	.26*	.37**	-.04	1.00	.29*	0.01	-.02
C	.24	.02*	.36**	.29*	1.00	-.12	.05

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

(Note: N = Neuroticism; E = Extraversion; O = Openness; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness, ACMT = Achievement Motivation Test; GPA = Grade Point Average.)

From the above table, we can interpret that Neuroticism and Agreeableness are positively correlated ($r = .26$; $p < .05$), Extraversion and Agreeableness are positively correlated ($r = .37$; $p < .01$), Extraversion and Conscientiousness are positively correlated ($r = .29$; $p < .05$), Openness and Conscientiousness are positively correlated ($r = 0.36$, $p < .01$), Agreeableness and Conscientiousness are positively correlated ($r = .29$; $p < .05$). However, no significant correlation was found between the Big Five Personality traits and academic performance and achievement motivation.

Openness is the only facet of personality, according to Costa and McCrae (1997) that is related to intelligence. Openness is a broad facet of personality that encompasses creativity, aesthetic sensitivity, differentiated emotions and unconventional values. However, according to the results, Openness to Experience has no effect on achievement motivation and academic performance. As such, there may be extraneous factors that may have been the cause of such a result. For example, sojourn students, due to their difficulty in adjusting to the altered cultural set-up, might be hindered in their creativity and aesthetic sensitivity. While adjusting to their new environment, they might have trouble experiencing differentiated emotions, and might face difficulty in accepting the unconventional values of their new environment. This might have negatively affected their achievement motivation and academic performance.

Previous studies have found that conscientiousness has strong correlations with academic achievement and intelligence tests (Krug & Johnson, 1986). Conscientiousness is that facet of personality which organizes and directs behavior and which is responsible for impulse control. However, according to the results, that Conscientiousness has no effect on achievement motivation and academic performance. As such, there may be extraneous factors that may have been the cause of such a result. For instance, due to the disruption faced by the sojourn students

by their shift to a new place, they may find it difficult to organize and direct behavior effectively. They may also find it hard to control their impulses due to their exposure to new horizons and opportunities. Thus, their achievement motivation and academic performance might have been adversely affected.

For the facet of Extraversion, it has been theorized that high E scorers, due to their impulsive behavior and difficulty concentrating on academic material, perform poorly in an academic setting, (Eysenck, 1996) and the correlation between extraversion and achievement has been close to zero (Eysenck, 1994). The present study has found similar results well, that Extraversion has no effect on achievement motivation and academic performance.

Because this facet of Agreeableness involves working in groups, it may play a role in evaluations of classroom behavior, rather than written work. As such, it has been theorized that Agreeableness does not relate closely to academic achievement (Rothstein, Paunonen, Rush & King, 1994). The present study has found similar results well, that Agreeableness has no effect on achievement motivation and academic performance.

For the facet of Neuroticism, it has been theorized that the emotional instability of high N scorers lead to low achievement, because of their constant worries which supply parasitic information that inhibits cognition (Eysenck, 1992). The present study has found similar results well, that Neuroticism has no effect on achievement motivation and academic performance.

Conclusion

The results from the study show that there is no significant correlation between the Big Five personality traits and Achievement Motivation, and no significant correlation between the Big Five personality traits and Grade Point Average i.e. Academic Performance. The reason that no correlation was found might have been because of various factors. The different cultural set-up that sojourn students have to face, as well as their adjustment/maladjustment to their new environment might have affected their achievement motivation and academic performance more than their personality.

The study has several important implications. The findings of the study show that there is no relationship between personality and achievement motivation among sojourn students, which leads us to question the factors which might be affecting such a lack of relationship. Thus, Future research can try to find out these factors. There could be cultural factors at work here, which can be uncovered through further research.

Thus, the findings of this study could prove useful information for the formation of policies with regard to sojourn students. It could also be useful in the development of intervention based programs for sojourn students to increase their achievement motivation and academic performance.

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